

# EARLY BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE OF BENGAL

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MORPHOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE *VIHĀRAS* OF C. 3RD TO 8TH CENTURIES

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The thesis is submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for  
the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**

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## DECLARATION

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# **Early Buddhist architecture of Bengal**

Morphological study on the *vihāra* of c. 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries

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## ABSTRACT

### Early Buddhist architecture of Bengal

Morphological study on the *vihāra* of c. 3rd to 8th centuries

Mohammad Habib Reza

This dissertation examines the evolution of early Buddhist architectural forms of Bengal, specifically its *vihāra* and shrine structures. In general, this research explores Gupta and post-Gupta (c. third to eighth centuries AD) *vihāra* architecture of Bengal, where the primary focus is on the Buddhist shrine architecture constructed during this period. There is a preconception amongst historians that the period between the Gupta and the *Pāla* periods was characterized by disorder and chaos, commonly known as the period of *Matsyanyayam*. This is the reason why discussions on the architectural history of Bengal have generally commenced from the *Pāla* period (c. 750 AD onwards). Analyzing extant and new evidences this study argues that the Buddhist architecture of Bengal thrived during the intervening period, albeit under the patronage of local kings and rulers.

In the field of art and sculpture it is accepted that Buddhist *Pāla* art was a continuation of previous Gupta art forms, where post-Gupta period acted as the transition or a bridge. Following this general pattern, as this thesis argues, the rectangular Gupta shrine plan takes a mature cruciform shape during the *Pāla* period through a complex morphological development. The nature of Buddhist shrine architecture in Bengal during the early Gupta, later Gupta, and post-Gupta periods is described in the light of analyzed archaeological findings and architectural trends.

As no extant remains of superstructures have been identified for any early Buddhist architecture in Bengal, this study also proposes their likely appearance through virtual reconstruction of selected shrines that also include the conjectural architectural plans for the early stage of its development as a preparation for further analysis. Through these analyses the thesis completes the study of morphological development of the Bengal *vihāra* of the pre-*Pāla* period, suggesting that the superstructure generally followed the north Indian *Nāgara* language.

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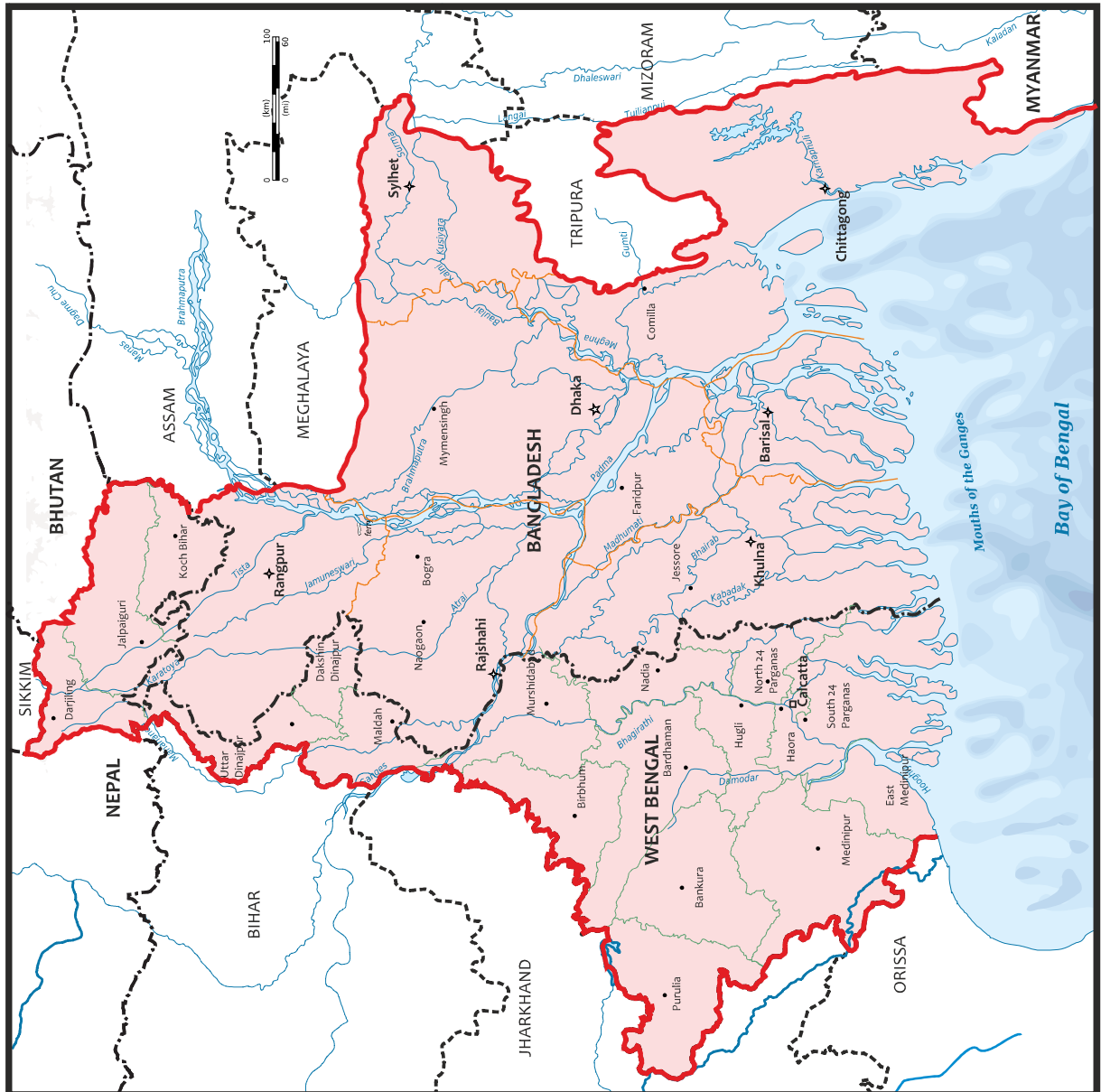
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Figure i

## STUDY AREA

WITH PRESENT POLITICAL BOUNDARY

- Study area
- International border
- Indian state border
- Divisional border
- District border
- town, city
- divisional capital
- district capital



**Figure ii**  
**PARTITION OF BENGAL**  
**(1947)**

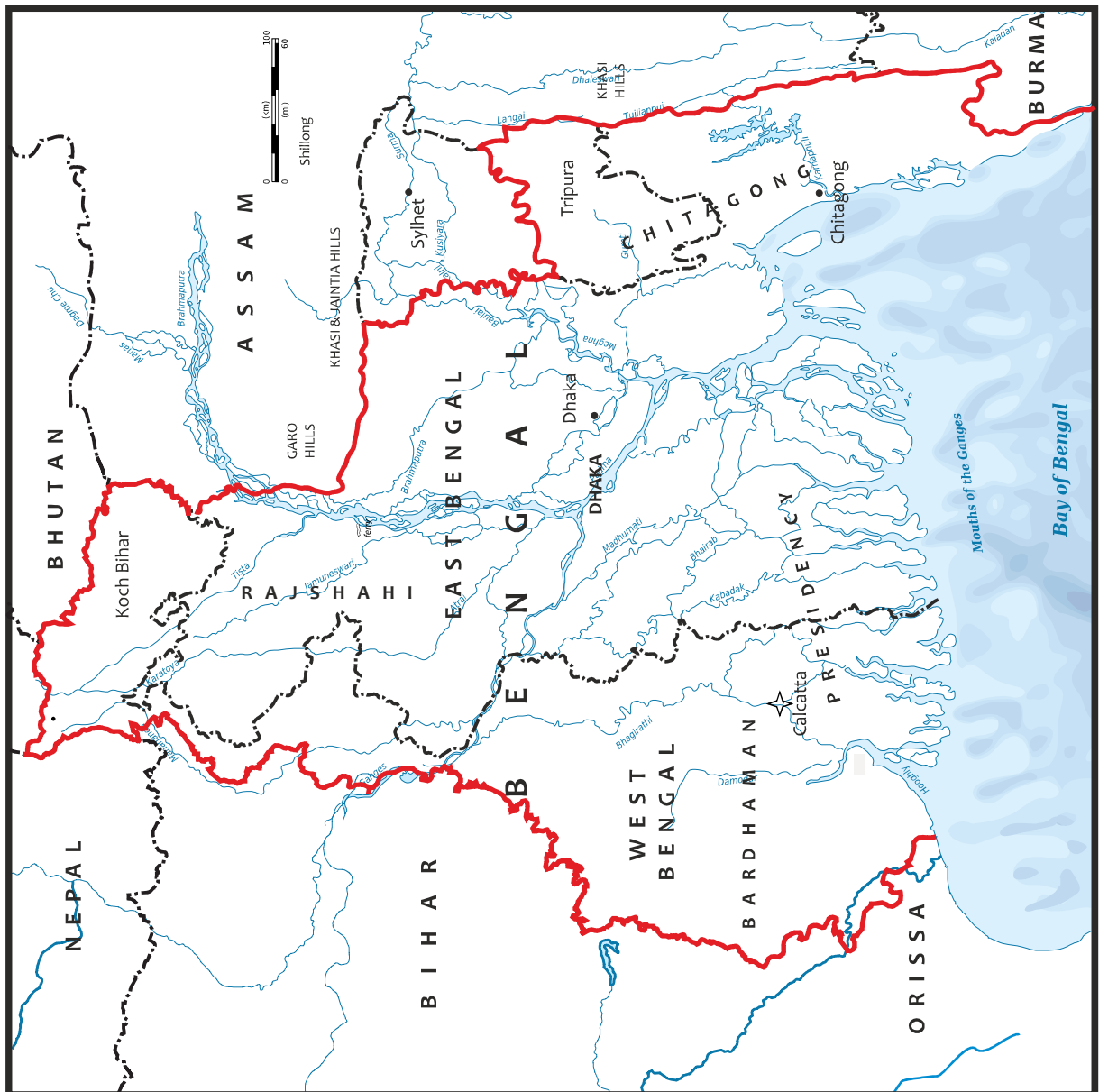
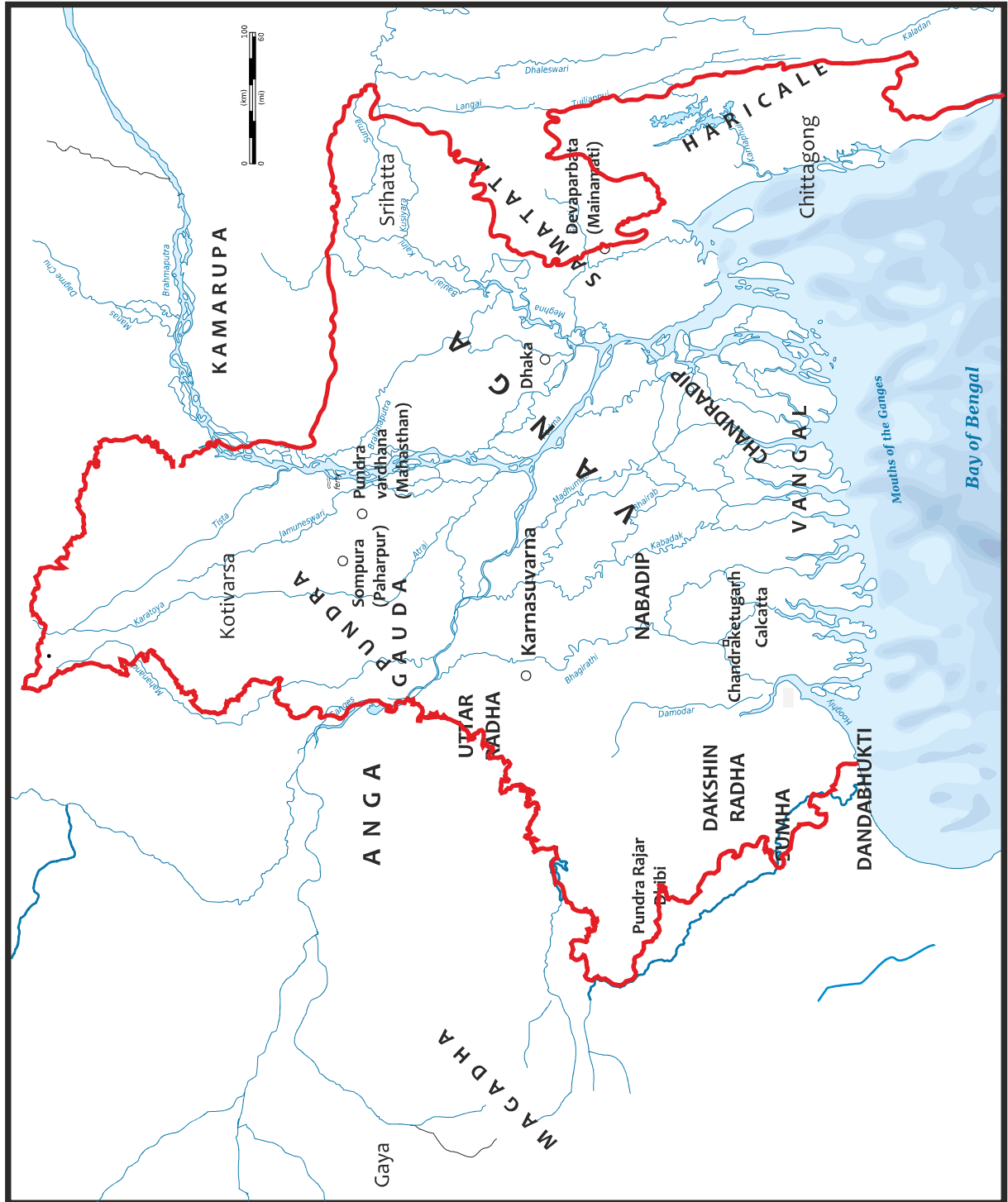


Figure iii

## BENGAL

## ANCIENT PERIOD



## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the evolution of early Buddhist architectural forms of Bengal, specifically the *vihāra* and the shrine structures. In general this research will explore Gupta and post-Gupta (320 AD – 750 AD) *vihāra* architecture of Bengal where the primary focus is on the Buddhist shrine architecture constructed during this period. Archaeological excavations revealed traces of numerous Buddhist religious artifacts from the fifth until the eleventh centuries AD in this region. Based on these artifacts and available literary data some ruined archaeological sites show possibilities of being of the Gupta period. The physical condition of most of these structures are extremely poor, which makes it difficult to identify its detailed architectural characteristics. However, from archaeological excavations scholars have been able to establish the layout, architectural plan and spatial organization of a few of these structures. Relatively little archaeological work has been conducted on the Gupta legacy in Bengal; it is difficult therefore to determine the characteristics of the architectural style solely from the archaeological evidence of that particular period. Evidence from the post-Gupta dynasties, such as the *Gonda*, *Khadga*, *Vardhan* and mainly the *Pāla*, also bear evidences of probable Gupta influence on later periods. This research uses available archaeological, geographical, historical and social-anthropological resources to explore the possible Gupta and post-Gupta *vihāra* architectural style, in particular the Buddhist *vihāra* and shrine development of Bengal.



## 1.1 Background of the Study

### 1.1.1 Concept of Bengal

Indian history was always been a puzzle (Fergusson, 1910: 3) and until now mediaeval Bengal is one of the pieces of this match, especially its early period. Though significant work has been done in archaeology, much of the material evidence of Bengal's glorious past has been washed away by the annual monsoon floods, the change of the course of rivers or more recently, through climatic alterations. Almost every ancient city in this region developed along one of its numerous rivers. Their change of course is so rapid and the effect so devastating that monsoon rains often wash away extensive stretches of their banks within a few days. On the other hand, due to the lack of availability of stone, local building materials such as wood and brick are more commonly employed, but are not strong enough to withstand the onslaught of time and the climate.

The ancient history of Bengal is one of the most significant and dynamic challenges for historians. One of the reasons for this is the lack of appropriate evidence, as mentioned above. The other is that only a small number of archaeological explorations have been conducted in this region due to shortage of funds, and almost all of these lasted only for a short period as investments dried up and bureaucratic barriers increased. In most cases, unfortunately therefore, historians almost always have had to rely only on secondary and tertiary material to expose the ancient times. Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim literature, as well as, Greek, Roman, Chinese, Turkish, Afghan and Mughal documents are the familiar sources for the ancient history of this region (Thapar, 2004: I). In these evidences Bengal is almost entirely absent. At the same time, there are hints strewn about in these texts regarding the region.

The term Bengal, as is well known, has borne different meanings at different times (Monahan, 1924: vii). Epigraphic and literary references do not offer a clear idea about its location, nor is it possible to decide whether it alludes to the entire country of *Vanga* or a specific part of it.

Bengal, the world's largest delta region, lies in the low-lying Ganges–Brahmaputra River Delta, commonly known as the Ganges Delta. Evidences refer to the rise and fall of a large number of principalities in this region which were variously known as *Anga*, *Puṇḍra*/ *Puṇḍravardhana*, *Gauda*, *Daṇḍābhukti*, *Karṇasuvarṇa*, *Vareṇḍra*, *Rārḥ*, *Summha Deśa*, *Vaṅga*, *Baṅgālāḥ*, *Harikēṣa*, *Chāṇḍradwīpa*, *Śubāṇabīthī*, *Nayabakashika*, *Lukhnauti* and *Samatāṭa*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Riyāṣ al-salātīn* describe that the name Bengal was originally 'Bang' and the reason why the word 'al' was added to it was this: 'al' in the Bengali language means an 'embankment' or raised ground, which is placed around a garden or cultivation so that floods may not enter it. From the ancient times, the chieftains of Bengal used to raise mounds to make homes, cultivations and buildings within. That's why people used to call this country *Baṅgālāḥ* (Salim, 1902: 19).

Bangle or parts of it were under the control of invaders at various points in history. Rulers of peripheral principalities such as *Arākāṇ*, *Kāmaruṇa*, Assam, *Magadha*, *Kaliṅga*, Kannauj had control over Bengal at different times. Even distant rulers, such as those of the Tibetan tribes, the Gurjara-Pratiharas and the Chola Dynasty of southeast India reigned over Bengal for temporary period, which has contributed to the complexity of this region's history. The culture of Bengal, like the rest of the subcontinent, has the special characteristics of its power of assimilation. Invader after invader has poured into this land in their attempt to conquer it; while some had temporary success, in the long run all of them became absorbed and assimilated.

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<sup>1</sup> *Anga* (region of Bhagalpur and Monghyr in Bihar and parts of Bengal), *Puṇḍra*/ *Puṇḍravardhana* (now some part of East Bihar ie Purnea, West Bengal and northern Bangladesh), *Gauda* (parts of West Bengal and Bangladesh), *Daṇḍābhukti* (southern West Bengal), *Karṇasuvarṇa* (part of West Bengal), *Vareṇḍra* (northern Bangladesh), *Rārḥ* (southern areas of West Bengal), *Summha Deśa* (south-western West Bengal), *Vaṅga* (central Bangladesh), *Baṅgālāḥ* (southern Bangladesh), *Harikēṣa* (North-East Bangladesh), *Chāṇḍradwīpa* (Southern Bangladesh), *Śubāṇabīthī* (central Bangladesh), *Nayabakashika* (central and southern Bangladesh), *Lukhnauti* (North Bengal and Bihar) and *Samatāṭa* (Eastern Bangladesh). (BANGLADESH TOWARDS 21ST CENTURY, Published by the Ministry of Information, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh)

Bengal is a great plain lying between the Himalayan Mountains and that part of the Indian Ocean known as the Bay of Bengal. It is dissected by a large number of rivers and the tributaries and distributaries of the Ganges or the Brahmaputra; its soil in most part being the alluvial deposition brought down by these rivers. The language generally spoken is Bengali and the country is known in that language as *Bangālāh* or *Banga-deś*, the country of *Baṅga*.

The territory of Bengal extends over more than 94,000 square miles and is currently divided between two separate countries; the western part forms the state of West Bengal in India and the eastern part forms the country of Bangladesh. During the British era it was divided into six divisions forming the eastern Indian province of Bengal, closely approximating its ancient territory (Wood, 1895: 3). There were three divisions in the middle, two on the east, and one on the west; of the three divisions in the middle, the southern one, close to Bay of Bengal, was called the Presidency Division. North of the Presidency Division, was Rajshahi; formerly called *Vareṇdra* and situated in the very midst of Bengal. North of Rajshahi and stretching into the Himalayan Mountains, was the division of Koch Bihar. The two divisions on the eastern side of Bengal were called Dacca (Dhaka) and Chittagong. The western division of Bengal was Bardwan, which covered the land west of the Bhagirathi or Hugli river, the distributor of the Ganges that defines the western edge of the Gangetic delta.

While Aryan influence in ancient India was felt in the north-western parts well before the advent of the Common Era, it took a long time for the Aryans to reach the eastern limits of the subcontinent. That is why the people of Bengal felt the tide of Aryanisation much later. Aryanisation pushed into Bengal from the west but it took about one thousand years to Aryanise the whole of Bengal. By the time Aryan influence reached Bengal it become feeble during its long march through the entire area of northern India (Chowdhury, 2008). Thus the pre-Aryan elements can be found deeply rooted in the culture of the people of Bengal and even under Aryan influence, which was not too strong.

### 1.1.2 Bengal before the Gupta

The *Mahābhārata*<sup>2</sup>, one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, described in its different verses five eastern kingdoms: *Aṅga*, *Vaṅga*, *Kaliṅga*, *Puṇḍra* and *Suhma*. According to this epic, the founders of these kingdoms were all adopted sons of a king named Vali (Bali), born by a sage named *Gautama Dirghatamas* who lived in *Magadha* close to the city of *Girivrajā* (Viyasa: 276). Lack of proper archeological evidence and chronological order makes it difficult to fix any date from this epic. However it is certain that the four of the kingdoms, except *Kaliṅga*, belong to the ancient territory of Bengal.

Based on past chronicles Persian *Rijāʿu-s-salātīn*<sup>3</sup> narrated that when Ham, with the permission of his holy father Noh (Noah), the prophet (may he be in peace!), set himself to colonize the south. Ham deputed his five sons, Hind, Sind, Habash, Zanaj, Barbar, and Nubah, in all directions on colonizing expeditions and the tract that each of them colonized was called after him. Hind, the eldest son of Hum, came to the country of Hindustan and it was so named after him. Hind had four sons, Purab, Bang, Dakin, and Naharwal, and every tract that was colonized by each were called after him. And Bang, the second son of Hind, colonized the country of Bengal (Salim, 1902: 19).

Excavations have revealed the traces of a 3,500 year-old civilization similar to Harappa-Mohenjo-Daro at *Paṇḍu-Rājār-Dhibi*<sup>4</sup> (Banerjee, 2002: 70), the name of which is associated with

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<sup>2</sup> The *Mahābhārata* is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the other one is the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Traditionally, the authorship of the *Mahābhārata* is attributed to Vyasa. The origins of the story probably fall between the eighth and ninth centuries BC but the text probably reached its final form by the early Gupta period (c. fourth century AD).

<sup>3</sup> *Rijāʿu-s-salātīn* is a Persian historical work about the history of Bengal by Ghulam Husain Salim which was completed in 1788 AD. Indeed, *Rijāʿu-s-salātīn* is pre-eminently the history of Muhammadan Bengal, because other works before or after this dealt only with certain periods of Bengal history, whilst this narrative comprises the history of Bengal from the earliest mythological period to the dawn of British rule.

<sup>4</sup> *Paṇḍu-Rājār-Dhibi* is a renowned mound at Rajpotadanga village near the southern bank of the Ajay River in the Bardhaman District of West Bengal.

King *Paṇḍu* mentioned in *Mahābhārata*. There archeologists found six periods of occupation including two main periods of the Chalcolithic period around 1600 - 750 BC and the Iron Age.

The earliest evidences of settlement in Bengal are still too brief and vague for a clear cultural assessment but there should be little doubt that its origin is linked with the first growth of agriculture and trade in eastern India. Considering the two most recent archeological excavations at *Paṇḍu-Rājār-Dhibi* and *Wari-Bateshwar*<sup>5</sup>, an early beginning of settlement should no longer be considered an improbability (Chakrabarti, 1972: 215).

The Puranic texts, such as *Garuda Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu-Dharmottara* and *Markendeya Purāṇa* divide ancient Indian into nine divisions, while Buddhist text *Anguttara Nikaya* divides into sixteen great nations states. In these texts, *Anga* has a prominent presence. According to the last of the Vedic texts, *Atharva Veda* (V.22.14) and the Jaina *Prajñāpāna*, *Anga* had flourished in central and north-west India in the sixth century BC (Levi *et al.*, 1993: 73). During the reign of *Anga*, the founder of the kingdom, initially succeed to capture *Magadha* and its borders extended towards the *Maṭṣya* country (eastern part of India). This success of the *Anga*'s did not last long. About the middle of sixth century BC, Bimbisara, the crown prince of *Magadha* killed *Brahmadatta*, the last independent king of *Anga* and seized *Champā*, the capital of *Anga*. Thenceforth, *Anga* became an integral part of the expanding Magadha Empire.

*Magadha*, one of the sixteen ancient Indian *Mahājanapadas*, was considered a prominent *janapada* in Indian history. The kingdom was the portion of the present Indian state of Bihar, lying south of the Ganges but later expanded to include most of Bihar and Bengal. The Greek and Roman geographers and historians gave the name of the people of this region as *Gangaridai* or *Gangaritai* or *Gongarides* and *Pharrasii* or *Prasii* and called their capital *Palibothra* or *Palimbothra*, which was

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<sup>5</sup> *Wari-Bateshwar* is a significant archaeological site in Bangladesh located three kilometers west of Belabo thana of Narshingdi district. *Wari* and *Bateshwar* are two contiguous villages long known for being the find-spot of silver punch-marked coins in Bengal.

*Pāṭaliputra* in Sanskrit (Monahan, 1924: 1-18). Though there are contradictions amongst the historians about their war strength, it is certain that they had a vast army about 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 2,000 chariot and 3,000 elephants (Thapar, 2004: 154-156). Magadha was ruled by the Hariyanka dynasty (545-346 BC) and the Śiśunāga dynasty (430-364 BC) for about 200 years. There are many accounts of Bimbisara and his son Ajatashatru of Hariyanka dynasty in the Buddhist *Jātakas*, since they were contemporaries of Gautama Buddha. King Bimbisara had met Buddha for the first time when Buddha had not achieved enlightenment and later became an important disciple of the Buddha. Both were patrons of the then new religion of Buddhism and let the *Saṅgha*<sup>6</sup> function in their kingdom.

The Nanda dynasty<sup>7</sup>, who ruled *Magadha* during 424-321 BC, was short but significant. The founder of the dynasty, *Mahāpadmānanda* (from 424 BC), the illegitimate son of king *Mahānandin* of the Śiśunāga dynasty, died at the age of 88 and was the key ruler of this dynasty. They inherited the large kingdom of *Magadha* and built up a vast army to extend it to yet more distant frontiers. At their greatest extent, the Nanda empire extended from Bihar and Bengal in the east to eastern Punjab in the west (Mookerji, 1966: 28-33). In 326 BC, the army of Alexander the Great approached the boundaries of Magadha, but was exhausted by their previous warfare and frightened by the prospect of facing yet another giant army on the bank of the Ganges and refused to march further east. Another view about this incident is that one prominent Nanda king, *Dhanananda*, led the Indians as well as the Sogdians fought against Alexander's forces at the famous battle at Gaugamela on the eastern boundary of Persia. His cavalry fought valiantly and remained virtually intact through this (Pal, 2002).

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<sup>6</sup> *Saṅgha* (*saṃgha*) is a Pali or Sanskrit word can be translated roughly as "association" or "assembly" or "community". In Buddhism most commonly, *Saṅgha* means the monastic *saṅgha* of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns. Buddhists traditionally consider monastic life to provide the environment most conducive to advancing toward enlightenment, and the *saṅgha* is responsible for maintaining, translating, advancing, and spreading the teachings of the Buddha.

<sup>7</sup> Different sources suggest, name of the founder of that dynasty was *Mahā-Padmā-Ānanda* and this dynasty was *Ānanda* Dynasty. But it was mispronounced as *Mahāpadmā-naṇḍa* and *Nanda* Dynasty.

The Nandas had established a methodical collection of taxes through their administrative system and their wealth was well-known. To carry out irrigation they also built canals even as far as *Kalinga* (Thapar, 2004: 154-156). As the Nandas were from a low social status, being described as *Shudra*, they were neutral from a religious point of view at their earlier stage while *Mahāpadmānanda* followed Buddhism in the later time. That is why their well-built economic system probably boosted the Buddhist development throughout the *Magadha* region during their reign.

Though the Nanda rulers had a vast army and wealth, they were hated and despised by their subjects on account of their origin. Plutarch tells that "*Sandrocottus, when he was a stripling, saw Alexander himself, and we are told that he often said in later times that Alexander narrowly missed making himself master of the country, since its king was hated and despised on account of his baseness and low birth*" (Perrin, 1914: 7). The founder of that dynasty was the only ruler who extended the empire. He was succeeded by his eight sons; *Dhanananda* and *Shubharwar* were the eldest and the youngest sons, respectively. They ruled *Magadha* till their father death and later they moved to north-west India, currently Punjab and the area of present Pakistan. Their control over *Magadha* as well as Bengal began waning following their migration.

The Maurya<sup>8</sup> dynasty (322–185 BC) ruled Bengal after the Nanda from *Magadha*. They built a geographically extensive and powerful political and military empire, the Maurya Empire of ancient India. At its greatest extent, the empire stretched to the north along the natural boundaries of the Himalayas to the east into what is now Assam. To the west, it reached beyond modern Pakistan and significant portions of what is now Afghanistan, including the modern Herat and Kandahar provinces. The empire was also expanded into India's central and southern regions, but it excluded a small portion of unexplored tribal and forested regions near *Kalinga*

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<sup>8</sup> The name Maurya probably from a Sanskrit word *Mayura* means peacock. The Jain tradition describes Chanḍragupta Maurya, the founder of this dynasty, as a grandson of the chief of village of Peacock tamers. The Maurya emblem *Mayura* seen in their coinage and monuments provides further evidence to it.

(Daniélou and Hurry, 2003: 94-116). Kautilya's *Arthashastra*<sup>9</sup> and the Edicts of *Aśoka*<sup>10</sup>, gives a clear idea about this dynasty. Though Maurya chronology became very definite by these sources, the dates are still controversial. The Maurya empire is considered one of the most significant periods in Indian history.

An inscription written in the Brahmi script, found in an excavated site of the old *Puṇḍranagar*, now represented by the ruins at *Mahāsthān* in Bogra district, bear testimony to Maurya rule (3rd century BC) in parts of Bengal (Chowdhury, 2008). Also, from the archaeological excavations at that same site were discovered coins with five symbols distinctive of the Mauryan period<sup>11</sup>. The probable dates of these coins are 5th century BC to 2nd century AD. Similar coins have also been discovered from *Wari-Bateshwar*, Rajshahi and Mymensingh regions (Karim, 2008). Till now, these are the archaeological evidences of Maurya control over Bengal.

The Maurya Empire was founded in 322 BC by Chaṇḍragupta Maurya<sup>12</sup>, with the help of *Kautilya*<sup>13</sup>, had overthrown the Nanda Dynasty at *Magadha* and began rapidly expanding his power

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<sup>9</sup> Legend describes Chanakya (Kautilya) as the author of a book entitled *Arthashastra*, which appears to have been written during the time of Chaṇḍragupta but with writings added centuries later. *Arthashastra* means science of property and material success, and in the book this success includes political and diplomatic strategy aimed at uniting India. It has a flavour to it similar to the Legalism that rivaled Confucianism and Taoism in China. The book advises a king to control his subjects, especially his ministers, and the Brahmins, wealthy merchants and his beautiful women.

<sup>10</sup> The Edicts of *Aśoka* are a collection of 33 inscriptions on the Pillars of *Aśoka*, as well as boulders and cave walls, made by the Emperor *Aśoka* of the Mauryan dynasty during his reign from 272 to 231 BCE. These inscriptions are dispersed throughout the areas of modern-day Pakistan and northern India, and represent the first tangible evidence of Buddhism.

<sup>11</sup> Coins having group of five symbols indicate Mauryan imperial coins. See Karim R. (2008) Punch Marked Coins. In: Islam PS (ed) *Banglapedia*. Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

<sup>12</sup> The Buddhist tradition tells us the death of Chaṇḍragupta's father left his mother destitute and she took shelter in *Pataliputra*. The baby was deposited for safety with a cowherd, but the latter sold the child to a hunter who employed him to tend cattle. The boy was always fond of playing the king's role with his companions. But many Indian historians hold the view that Chaṇḍragupta was an illegitimate child of the Nanda Dynasty of Magadha in eastern India, born to a Nanda prince and a maid named "Mura".



westwards across central and western India, taking opportunistic advantage of the disruptions of local powers in the wake of the withdrawal westward by Alexander the Great's Macedonian and Persian armies. By 316 BC the empire had fully occupied north-western India, defeating and conquering the areas left by Alexander.

Before Chaṇḍragupta's consolidation of power, small regional kingdoms dominated north-western part of the sub-continent, while the Nanda empire dominated the Gangetic plain (Sastri, 1967: 26). Chaṇḍragupta extended his empire from Bengal and Assam in the east, to Afghanistan and Baluchistan in the west, to Kashmir and Nepal in the north, and the Deccan Plateau in the south. He succeeded in bringing together most of the Indian subcontinent (Daniélou and Hurry, 2003: 96). In this way Chaṇḍragupta first unified this region and is considered as the first genuine emperor of India.

The first Seleucid king, Seleucus I attempted to recover lands taken by Chaṇḍragupta. But in the year 305 BC, Chaṇḍragupta turned back Seleucus' drive. Seleucus was forced to settle with Chaṇḍragupta. Finally the two rulers concluded a peace treaty: a marital treaty (Epigamia) was concluded, implying a marital alliance between the two dynastic lines. As a result diplomatic relations were established and several Greeks, such as the historian Megasthenes<sup>14</sup>, Deimakos and Dionysius resided at the Maurya court (Thapar, 2004: 177).

During the Maurya a strong centralized state with a complex administration was established at *Pāṭaliputra*. The Empire was very well governed, with tempered autocracy at the top and democracy at the city and village levels. Chaṇḍragupta divided the Maurya empire into

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<sup>13</sup> Probably, *Kautilya* (*Chanakya*) was the elected president of the *Dhanasala*, a charity school run by the *Dhananaṇḍa*. The manners and features of *Kautilya* made *Dhananaṇḍa* to dismiss Kautilya and the latter took vow to ruin the Nandas. *Kautilya* encountered this ambitious kingly character in a boy (*Chaṇḍragupta*) and used him to take revenge on *Dhananaṇḍa*.

<sup>14</sup> Megasthenes was the third-century BC Greek historian and ambassador to the Chaṇḍragupta Mauryan court. He had expressed his admiration for the efficient administration of that empire and his book 'Indica' is a collection of comments of other Roman & Greek travellers about the prosperity of the Mauryan cities.

administrative districts or zones, which were administered by the closest relatives and most trusted generals. Hierarchical government with a large civil servant group ruled various departments such as trade, taxation, mining, roads, and irrigation canals. The topmost officers from these districts or zones directly reported to the Maurya ruler. Government held trade monopolies and owned slaughter-houses, gambling halls, mines, shipbuilding operations, armament factories and spinning and weaving operations, as well as oversaw the standardization of weights, measures and coinage.

Chandragupta adopted Jainism, renounced the worldly affairs, became disciple of Jain *muni*, Bhadrabahu Swami and followed him to south India (Thapar, 2004: 178). He spent his last days, (298 BC) in the hill of south India which is called after him as *Chandragiri*, where the tallest statue of Gomateshwara was carved by the Gangas later during their rule.

Bindusara was the second Maurya emperor (c. 298-273 BC) after Chandragupta Maurya. During his reign, the empire expanded further southwards as far south as Mysore. He conquered sixteen states and extended the empire from sea to sea. The empire included the whole of India except the region of Kalinga (Thapar, 2004: 178). Bindusara died in 273 BC and was succeeded by his son *Aśoka* (c. 269-232 BC).

*Aśoka*, popularly known as *Aśoka* the Great, was the third emperor of the Maurya Dynasty who ruled almost all of the Indian subcontinent from c. 269 BC to 232 BC (Thapar, 2004: 51). After a number of military conquests he took control over a vast empire that stretched from present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan in the west to Bangladesh and the Indian state of Assam in the east and as far south as northern Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. He conquered *Kalinga* which was unconquered since *Chandragupta* Maurya; he became a follower of the Buddha's teaching after his conquest of *Kalinga*.

As a Buddhist follower *Asoka* built *stūpas*, *Saṅghārāmas*, *vihāras* and *chaityas* all over his empire and gave donations to *vihāras*. The Topra Pillar<sup>15</sup> summarizes *Asoka*'s efforts for the promotion of the Dharma and did play a major role in the propagation of Buddhism both within and outside his empire (Seneviratna, 1994: 70-91). He sent his only daughter Sanghamitta and son Mahindra to spread Buddhism in Sri Lanka. *Asoka* also sent many prominent Buddhist *Sthavira* monks, like Madhyamik *Sthavira*, to modern Kashmir and Afghanistan; Maharaskshit *Sthavira* to Syria, Persia, Egypt, Greece, Italy and Turkey; Massim *Sthavira* to Nepal, Bhutan, China and Mongolia; Sohn Uttar *Sthavira* to modern Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam; Mahadhhamarakhkhita *Sthavira* to Maharashtra; Maharakhhit *Sthavira* and Yavandhammarakhkhita *Sthavira* to south India. *Asoka* is widely credited for his patronage of the third Buddhist council which was convened in c. 250 BC at *Pāṭaliputra*.

*Asoka*'s capital was in *Pāṭaliputra* and during his reign urban centers and ports of *Vaṅga*, such as *Chandrabhaga* and *Tamralipta* became centers of trade and ships heading for the eastern coast and south India began their voyage from these ports (Thapar, 2004: 183). Asoka ruled for about thirty seven years and died in c. 232 BC. Subsequently, a political decline set in and the empire began to breakup (Thapar, 2004: 107).

About 50 years after *Asoka*'s death *Brihadrata* (c. 191-187 BC), the last of the Maurya rulers, was assassinated in 187 BC during a military parade by the commander-in-chief of his guard, *Pusyamitra* Sunga (c. 187–151 BC). *Pushyamitra*, the founder of Sunga dynasty, ruled for thirty six years and was succeeded by his son *Agnimitra*. There were eight more Sunga rulers but most of them were not very notable. Buddhist records such as the *Asokāvadāna*<sup>16</sup> write that the assassination of *Brihadrata* and the rise of the Sunga Empire led to a wave of persecution of

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<sup>15</sup> The Topra Pillar now in Delhi and dated in the 27th year from Asoka's coronation.

<sup>16</sup> The *Asokāvadāna* (Narrative of *Asoka*) is a second century AD text related to the legend of the Maurya Emperor *Asoka* the Great. The legend was translated into Chinese by *Fa-Hien* in fourth century AD.

Buddhists. However archaeological evidences<sup>17</sup> show that during the Sunga period (185 to 73 BC) Buddhist cultural activity also managed to survive somewhat in central India (Madhya Pradesh).

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<sup>17</sup> Some architectural expansions were done at the *stupas* of *Sāñchi* and Barhut that was originally started under the Buddhist emperor *Aśoka*.

## 1.2 Material for the study and previous scholarship

The history of architecture in Bengal spans over two thousand years. Not much work has been done in the field of architectural history of Bengal; most historians never attempted to trace the origin or the development of its architecture, introducing instead a selection of monuments (Haque, 2007: 151). However, a broad chronology has been established in the process representing the architectural panorama of Bengal, divided into five major periods; the Early phase, the Hindu-Buddhist period, the Muslim period, the colonial period and the modern period.

The Hindu-Buddhist and the Muslim periods cover the wider span of mediaeval Bengal architecture, mainly religious in nature. This religious architecture of Bengal has been treated by scholars as three separate movements belonging to three distinct periods. The Buddhist architecture created during the rule of the *Pāla* and *Śeṇa* dynasties (750-1200 AD), as well as the Hindu temples of the same period; the period of the Sultanate rule (1200-1550 AD) that followed resulted in the development of a regional style of Islamic architecture; and finally, the late medieval period of Hindu revival (1550-1850 AD) and the development of *Bangla*, *Chālā* and *Raṭṇa* type temples (Khare, 2004: 5; Majumdar, 1943).

Early historians such as Ghulam Husain Salim (Salim, 1902) and Francis John Monahan (Monahan, 1924) who wrote on the history of Bengal did not cover any of its architectural heritage; rather, their works provided important information regarding the political and cultural connectivity of Bengal with surrounding territories. Even early architectural historians of India such as James Fergusson (Fergusson, 1910), who authored the "History of Indian and Eastern Architecture", did not include any description of Bengal architecture, although it contained a chapter on Buddhist architecture including descriptions on *vihāras*. Repetition of this error can be noted in Benjamin Rowland's (Rowland, 1954) work, "The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist Hindu Jain". In contrast, in the monumental work of Percy Brown (Brown, 1965)

"Indian Architecture", Bengal architecture is taken up in a chapter entitled "The Brahmanical Buildings of Bengal (8th to 17th centuries)". This chapter mainly describes the Hindu temples of Bengal during the mediaeval period but does not cover the Buddhist architecture of the early mediaeval period, although in another chapter *Pahārpur mahāvihāra* was mentioned to refer to Buddhist *vihāras* of Bengal.

In 1934, S. K. Saraswati (Saraswati, 1934) wrote for the first time about the shrines of the early period of Bengal (750 - 1200 AD) in the Journal of the Oriental Society of Art published from Calcutta. He later wrote a chapter about the architecture of Bengal in the "History of Bengal" by R. C. Majumdar (Majumdar, 1943). Both of Saraswati's articles were brief overviews of the architectural activities in Bengal during 800-1200 AD based on manuscripts and a few extant remains. Later Saraswati classified the temples of Bengal on the basis of the Tibetan manuscripts of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* series housed at the Cambridge University (Saraswati, 1975). His works were later collated in the form of a book, "Architecture of Bengal" (Saraswati, 1976), which is the only known work describing the architecture of ancient Bengal prior to the Islamic conquest. It examines the architecture of *stūpas*, *vihāras* and shrines and includes a chapter on the shrines at Pagan in neighboring Burma. Although largely based on manuscripts, votives and sculptures he provides a fair idea about the type of each building form using extant examples and archaeological remains. In the absence of any drawings and due to the lack of illustrations, the study only provides a partial picture of shrine architecture of the period. Since the time period of the study was wider this did not appropriately consider typological analysis or development patterns. Particularly significant was his study of the famous *Pahārpur mahāvihāra* shrine in north Bengal, the rather enigmatic plan of which was identified by him as a *sarvatobhadra* type of architecture. From the very beginning he studied architecture with a strong archaeological orientation and avoided the enquiry of Indian architecture from a philosophical and mystic point of view.

Later works such as Frederick Asher's "Art of Eastern India, 300-800" (Asher, 1980) describes the political and architectural significance of Bengal during 300 to 800 AD to define the growth of sculptural in eastern India. His chronological divisions of the early mediaeval period, which he observed in the development of sculpture in eastern India, is an important contribution to the understanding of art during the Gupta age (200-550AD), its stylistic development (550-700 AD) and its bridge across to *Pāla* art (700-800). He discusses valuable information regarding artistic activity in eastern India in the period between the Gupta and the *Pāla* rule. It also provides information about *Pabārpur*, *Vikramsila* and *Salban viharas* and some architectural elements of the early *Pāla* period at Bodhgaya.

In 1984, AKM Zakaria (Zakariah, 2007) wrote in Bengali for the first time about the archaeological findings from Bangladesh in his book, "*Bangladesher Pratnasampad*" published by Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka. This work covers most archaeological findings of architectural relevance from Bangladesh and describes their features, invaluable given the lack of published material resulting from inordinately delayed reporting of archaeological excavations in Bangladesh.

As the religious architecture of Bengal – the Hindu-Buddhist and the Muslim periods – have been treated by scholars as three distinct movements from distinct periods, their contribution could also be seen to be falling into distinct groups as follows.

The subject of Sultanate architecture (c. 1338-1538AD) in Bengal is thoroughly covered by Dani (Dani and Prasad, 1961), Hasan (Hasan, 1979) and Michell (Michell, 1984). These works are descriptive in nature documenting the extant examples of the period. Dani's work is the first detailed and fairly comprehensive account of Islamic architecture in Bengal. It classifies the entire Islamic period on the basis of the ruling dynasties and examines each building, sometimes complimented with plans. However, these studies were specifically devoted to the Muslim period

in Bengal and did not see any relation between Islamic architecture and the earlier architectural traditions of Bengal.

David McCutcheon highlights the issue of artistic continuity within the Islamic and the late medieval architecture of Bengal in his "Hindu-Muslim Artistic Continuities in Bengal" (McCutcheon, 1968). Later Perween Hasan (Hasan, 1984) worked on the origins and development of Sultanate mosque types in Bangladesh and she identified the continuation of Bengal architectural tendencies in Sultanate mosques. In later writings Perween Hasan compared the plans of Sultanate mosques with those of Buddhist structures and observed continuity in Bengal architecture (Hasan, 1989) and has more recently published a book, "Sultans and mosques: the early Muslim architecture of Bangladesh" (Hasan, 2007).

Hindu shrine architecture of the late mediaeval period (1550-1850 AD) has received the attention of various scholars, initially in some articles of the Journal of the Asiatic Society. Manmohan Chakravarty (Chakravarty, 1909) names the late mediaeval shrines of Bengal as 'Bengali Temples' and writes about their general characteristics in his 1909 article. Later in around 1965, David J. McCutcheon (McCutcheon, 1972) started his pioneering exploration of late medieval shrines of Bengal and began publishing a series of articles about them in the Railway Magazine. The Asiatic Society later invited him to write a monograph about his studies; his book, "Late Mediaeval Temples of Bengal-Origins and Classifications" appeared after his untimely death. Later his archives were housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum and George Michell was invited to write about the shrines of Bengal. "Brick Temples of Bengal (From the Archives of David McCutcheon)" was edited by George Michell (Michell, 1983) with detailed description of iconography and well documented plans.

The late medieval shrines of Bengal have received much wider attention than the early shrines (800 - 1200 AD). However, in 2002 Ajay Khare published an article "Temples of the Pala period on the Chhotanagpur plateau and its Eastern friends" in the Journal of Bengal Art covering



earlier *Pāla* temples. Subsequently he has undertaken a comprehensive study of these early temples in his dissertation, "Temple architecture of Bengal: 9<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries" (Khare, 2004) and subsequently published the data as a book, "Temple architecture of eastern India" (Khare, 2005). This study is a systematic overview of the shrine architecture built in Bengal between the ninth and sixteenth centuries AD. Spanning eight hundred years, it attempts to define the tradition of Bengal temple architecture and examines the traits of continuity and of disruption in the tradition.

Khare starts with the foundation of the *Pāla* Empire in the Bengal region during the eighth century and ends in the early Mughal period in the late-sixteenth century; part of this study also traces the simultaneous development of Islamic and Hindu shrine architecture. Previous scholarship on the architecture of the period had concentrated on separate periods of dynastic rule, within small geographical regions, whereas this study looks at the entire period and the Bengal region as a whole in its attempt to define the Bengal shrine tradition. Describing the early examples and sources he suggested that the shrine architecture in Bengal as depicted on votives and architectural fragments received influences from Orissa and Magadha, and was part of the north Indian *Nāgara* tradition that spread widely through Bengal during the early period.

These early works on the religious architecture of Bengal primarily covers the early shrine structure, but do not provide any information about Buddhist *vihāra* architecture. Even in most cases the mediaeval Buddhist architecture of Bengal remains obscure, except for Ajay Khare's coverage of the later parts of the *Pāla* shrines (800 AD onwards) but do not provide any analysis of their architectural plan or form.

In 1999 Enamul Haque (Haque, 1999) published an article, "The early phase of architecture of ancient Bengal" in his edited Journal of Bengal Art to explore ancient architecture of Bengal through archaeological artifacts. Though his intention was to establish the existence of Bengal architecture during the ancient period, some examples demonstrate the existence of architecture

in Bengal during the Gupta period (fifth century AD). Later he published "The Art Heritage of Bangladesh" from the International Centre for the Study of Bengal Art (ICSBA) (Haque, 2007) that incorporated the sculptures, architecture, paintings, and minor and folk arts of Bangladesh. Chapter three of this volume describes the architectural heritage of Bangladesh from the earlier period to the modern era. He provides a short chronological description of the *stūpas*, *vihāras* and the shrines of Hindu-Buddhist period primarily from an archaeological perspective, though it is more systematic than Zakariah's work (Zakariah, 2007) stated earlier.

Later in 2009, Gerald Kozicz conducted some architectural analysis on the development of cruciform to oblong-shaped shrines to show the origin of Nyarma shrine in Bengal in his article, "From Mainamati to Nyarma: remarks on the development from cruciform to oblong-shaped temple layout" (Kozicz, 2009). This article focuses on the further development of shrine architecture based on the cruciform conceptualization of space and form. Though he did not mention the particular period of this transformation but from his analysis it can be assumed that it happened during the late Buddhist phase of the *Pāla* Empire.

No architectural analytical work has been done to identify the architectural development of the early Buddhist period of Bengal. However, significant work has been undertaken in the field of archaeology which cannot identify a complete perspective due to the partial excavation carried out on many early sites. Earlier archaeological activity in Bengal were primarily concerned with 'early historic' and 'early medieval' period remains of the Hindu-Buddhist archaeological sites in Bengal, the most important being *Pabārpur* in Naogaon, *Mahāsthān* in Bogra, and *Maināmati* in Comilla (Imam, 2008). Each is unique in its own way though *Pabārpur* gets extra attention from most scholars.

The first notice of *Pabārpur* is contained in the journal of Buchanan Hamilton (Buchanan, 1925), who at the instance of the East India Company surveyed Eastern India between the years 1807-1812. The *Pabārpur* mound struck Buchanan Hamilton as the most remarkable ruin in this region

where he found an immense steep heap of bricks “from 100 to 130 ft. in perpendicular height, covered with bushes, and crowned by a remarkable fine tree”(Buchanan, 1925: 64). It was next visited by EV Westmacott (1875 AD), whose description does not materially differ from that of Buchanan's. A few other British administrators such as H Beveridge (1878 AD), and CJ O'Donnel had also written on the ruins of *Pabārpur* and *Mahāsthāngarh*.

Sir Alexander Cunningham visited *Pabārpur* in the season of 1879 AD and recorded his observations in his report. Cunningham accurately estimated the height of the mound as not more than 80ft above the country and only 70 ft above the level of its own courtyard.. Owing to the non-cooperation of the local *ẓamiṇdār* (landlord), Cunningham could not investigate the site long enough to understand the real nature of *Pabārpur*. Excavations carried out much later, however, proved that it was the remains of the biggest Buddhist monastery in the subcontinent (very recently *Vikramsila* has been claimed to have been slightly larger). However the outstanding achievement of Cunningham was his brilliant identification of *Mahāsthāngarh* with the city of *Puṇḍranagar* on the basis of *Hsüan-Tsang's* itinerary.

Initial excavations at these sites, particularly *Pabārpur* and *Mahāsthān*, were begun by private research bodies; the first excavations at *Pabārpur* were carried out in 1922-23 under the joint auspices of the Varendra Research Society of Rajshahi and the University of Calcutta under the direction of DR Bhandarkar of the University. Afterwards, these excavations were taken over by the Archaeological Survey of India. The excavations continued until 1934 and possibly beyond, except for a break in 1930-32. They were led by KN Dikshit (Dikshit, 1938), but RD Banerjee and GC Chandra were also in charge at various times (Chandra and Dikshit, 1936). The *Pabārpur* report was published in 1938 as Memoirs No 55 of the Archaeological Survey of India and forms the most important and complete report on any Bengal site till date.

In 1907 some excavations were carried out at *Mahāsthān*, and then in 1928-29 KN Dikshit once again excavated there, closely followed by PC Sen (Sen, 1929). Sen probed a large number of

mounds and published a report on behalf of the Varendra Research Society in 1929 in which he published an excellent map of the site and its environs. Some religious buildings around the city have been extensively excavated, such as, *Goviṇḍa bhita* in 1928-29 and *Lakshmiṇḍareṇ medh* at Gokul in 1934-36.

The excavation of *Sitākot vibhāra* was started in 1967 by AKM Zakaria (Zakariah, 1969), where limited work was carried out and the results of this preliminary investigation was published in "Pakistan Archaeology". The excavation work was interrupted during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971 and later resumed in 1972 and continued until 1974. The excavation of *Bhāsu vibhāra* was started in 1973-74 and continued till 1979. These excavation reports were published later by Nazimuddin Ahmed (Ahmed, 1979) in "Bangladesh Archaeology" in 1979.

NK Bhattasali (Bhattasali, 1929) conducted a tour of *Maināmati* in 1917 and reported his findings in his "Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum". However, during the Second World War TN Ramachandran carried out an investigation and a report was published in BC Law Volume (Part II), in 1946. Later, the Pakistan Department of Archaeology very wisely took a cue from Ramachandran and continuous excavations followed from 1955 and is still on-going. In the meantime Barrie M Morrison (Morrison, 1974) investigated the ruins in the early 1960s and published the results in 1974 in a monograph, "Lalmai - A Cultural Center of Early Bengal". So far only nine sites have been excavated in *Maināmati*; these are, *Sālban vibhāra*, *Kutīlāmūrā*, *Chārpaṭramūrā*, *Rānir Bangalov*, *Ānanda vibhāra*, *Itākhōlāmūrā*, *Rupbānmūrā*, *Bhojā vibhāra* and *Maināmati* mound, and some other excavations are ongoing.

Some recent excavation work providing fresh data to rethink the architectural existence and chronology of early Bengal, such as those for *Pabārpur vibhāra* (Alam and Alam, 2008), *Ānanda vibhāra* (Alam et al., 2008b), *Bhāsu vibhāra* (Alam et al., 2008a), *Bharat Bhayna* (Alam, 2008), *Damdān pīrsthān dhibi* (Akbar et al., 2008).

Based on these archaeological findings a few architectural analyses have been carried out, primarily on the *Pahārpur vihāra*. Most scholars have focused attention on the central shrine of the *Pahārpur vihāra* and proposed a conjectural superstructure for this monument from different perspectives. As stated before, at first Dikshit (Dikshit, 1938) proposed the central shrine of *Pahārpur vihāra* as a *sarbatābhadrā* shrine. Then in 1961 Myer (Myer, 1961) demonstrated this structure to be a *stūpa*, which later Samuel (Samuel, 2002) and Rashid (Rashid, 2007) observed being a *stūpa*-shrine. However, Naqi and others produced a complete virtual reconstruction of *Pahārpur vihāra* including the surrounding residential structures as part of their postgraduate thesis, first published in 1999 (Naqi *et al.*, 1999), whereas Samuel and Rashid's observations were primarily concerned with the central shrine. Later Naqi published a revised version of his previous work with Mollick in Md Shafiqul Alam edited conference proceedings, "The International Seminar on elaboration of an Archaeological research strategy for Paharpur World Heritage site and its environment" (Naqi and Mollick, 2004). This volume also includes two other contributions on *Pahārpur vihāra*; "Understanding the Paharpur Temple architecture in new perspective" by Sima Hoque and MM Hoque (Hoque and Hoque, 2004), "An study on the architecture of the missing superstructure on the central Somapuri Mahavihara" by Shihabuddin Md Akbar (Akbar, 2004).

The above discussion shows that the previous scholars undertook their architectural analysis considering the architecture from the beginning of the *Pāla* period and nothing has been undertaken for the period preceding it. However, carefully examining the available evidence it is clear that the foundations of the mediaeval shrines in Bengal may lie in the early examples of the shrines built from the Gupta period. Archaeological excavations explored numerous examples of Buddhist architecture and artifacts of the early period from different locations in Bengal. Hence there is a need to consider the tradition of Bengal Buddhist architecture within the geographical extent of ancient Bengal during the period of 250 - 800 AD, so that the early architecture of

Bengal could assume its rightful place in the history of architecture of Bengal and in relation to the broader tradition of Indian temple architecture.

### 1.3 Towards formulation of the main aims

For any architectural study, visual and measured documentation is of immense importance. The study followed up the analysis of available literature on the subject by collating all extant drawings and photographs, both from published work and from unpublished sources. While published archaeological sources have placed great importance on the study of medieval Bengal, not much work has been done on the architectural analysis or the interpretation of the archaeological information on the early architecture of Bengal. For a rigorous architectural analysis, collecting measured drawings was an important step. Also to develop a wide understanding of the subject it was important to make an extensive survey of Bengal architecture before formulating the final aims of the research.

A large number of sites were visited for first-hand information and to find any un-documented examples. Initial exploration was undertaken to collect field data from published sources, where especial concern was works available in the Bengali language, and unpublished sources from Bangladesh. Although the research area initially established was the wider cultural region of Bengal, including West Bengal in India and Bangladesh, due to time constraints of this research the geographical limit of the survey area was narrowed down to Bangladesh, given also that most Buddhist sites of the period of the period of interest was located there. A month long trip was undertaken covering most Buddhist sites of Bangladesh, which was divided into major three zones: the northern, the eastern, and the central and southern. Naogaon, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Bogra were key sites in the northern zone, where much of the time was spent at *Pahārpur mahāvihāra*, *Sitākot vihāra*, *Jagaddāla vihāra*, *Mahāsthāngarh*, *Bhāsu vihāra*, *Bihārdhāp* and *Goviṇḍa Bhita*. More information about these were gathered through extensive study at the Varendra Research Museum at Rajshahi, the oldest collection of related material in Bangladesh. Gallery 2 and 5, especially, contain an excellent collection of Buddhist sculptures and images of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Taras, Jaina Tirthankaras of neighboring medieval sites. The museums at Paharpur

and Mahasthangarh sites also contain Buddhist antiquities ranging from terracotta objects to gold ornaments as well as coins excavated from the site. Although most valuable materials are placed in the difficult-to-access reserve stores, important information was collected through discussion with Md. Mahbubul Alom, the Custodian of Mahasthan Museum and team member of many excavation missions to Buddhist sites. Architect Emanuel, member of the Bangladeshi-French joint excavations team also provided unpublished information through informal interviews. Major archaeological survey reports were also collected from different sources across Bangladesh.

Comilla was a key place in the eastern zone, where *Sālbān vihāra*, *Ānanda vihāra*, *Rupbānmurā*, *Bhojā vihāra* were studied thoroughly. The collected archaeological antiquity of this zone is stored at the Mainamati museum, where many objects closely related to this research were studied. In the central zone the key places were Dhaka, the mount of *Rājā Harish Chandra* and Rajashan of Savar.

In the southern zone *Bharat Bhayna* and *Damdā Pireṣṭhan Dhībī* of Jessore are less published sources from the early period. Unpublished excavation plans and drawings of these sites were collected, which formed key sources for this research. Shihabuddin Md. Akbar<sup>18</sup> also provided valuable information through informal interviews about the Gupta architecture of this region. Moreover, additional informal discussions were undertaken with archaeologists and historians regarding key issues of the early architecture of Bengal. Among them Enamul Haque<sup>19</sup>, Mohammad Ali Naqi<sup>20</sup>, Abu Sayeed Mostaque Ahmed<sup>21</sup> and Md. Mozammel Hoque<sup>22</sup> shared valuable ideas about this early period of Bengal.

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<sup>19</sup> Dr. Enamul Haque, Chairman and Director of ICSBA and Founder-Director General (Retd.), Bangladesh National Museum.

<sup>20</sup> Prof. Mohammad Ali Naqi, Chairman, Department of Architecture, Stamford University, Bangladesh

<sup>21</sup> Prof. Abu Sayeed Mostaque Ahmed, Head, Department of Architecture, University of Asia Pacific, Bangladesh



On the basis of the literature survey and the visits it was observed that the history and the archaeology of Bengal already explored many things of pre *Pāla* period but lack of research it was not covered by the architectural history of Bengal. It was further observed that the earlier artifacts of Bengal are mainly attributed to the Buddhist tradition, although there are many examples to show a prominent presence of Hindu religion. These observations guided the development of the aims of this research as follows.

The major aim of this study is therefore primarily to explore the architectural trend of Buddhist religious structures built in the region of Bengal during the early period; primary concern is on the later Gupta (500-600 AD) and post-Gupta (600-750AD) periods. The question of how the architectural trend evolved is to be investigated. A study to trace the architectural characteristics of this early period is to be carried out as well to define this tradition and analyse the nature of continuity and change within the tradition.

The research also aims to reveal the texts and treatises relating to the developmental trends of Bengal's Buddhist architecture. The interpretation of the treatises to inform the architectural design of a specific *vihāra* or shrine will attempt to manifest the methods of ensuring architectural continuity. To understand the architecture of a particular period also means understanding the cultural and social histories of its time. Another objective of this study is to highlight some of the important issues regarding the post-Gupta period (600-750 AD), which is generally believed to be the dark period of Bengal's history. A study on the history and religion of the early period (from ancient times to the Gupta period) is also carried out to understand the context that influenced the trends in the early Buddhist architecture of later Gupta and post-Gupta periods.

Archaeological excavations show the existence of cruciform Buddhist shrine during the pre-early-*Pāla* periods. As no antecedent of the cruciform architecture can be identified in Bengal and for that matter, in any other part of India, it could be assumed that the cruciform shrine

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<sup>22</sup> Prof. Md. Mozammel Hoque, Department of Archaeology, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

developed from the rectangular shrine in Bengal. This study will examine the evolution of the cruciform shrine and analyse its morphological transformation through careful study of existing architectural trends.

The study may be summarized as below:

- To examine the possibilities of the existence of early Buddhist architecture in Bengal.
- To establish a detailed understanding of the tradition of Buddhist architecture in Bengal between 250 and 750 CE.
- To trace those architectural characteristics that define this tradition and analyse the nature of continuity and change within the tradition.
- To explain the formation of the mature cruciform style of Bengal shrines after 750 CE.

Eventually, this study is expected to be the core that links several disciplines which are integral to the study and analysis of the design process of early Buddhist architecture of Bengal, so that further issues may be raised for future studies.

#### **1.4 Defining the research questions**

As already mentioned, the aim of this research is to explore the Buddhist architecture built in Bengal during the Gupta (250 - 500 AD), the later Gupta (500 - 600 AD) and the post-Gupta (600 - 750 AD) periods. To obtain this goal, the key questions were established as follows,

- Was there any Buddhist architecture in Bengal before the *Pala* empire (c. 750-1175 AD)?
- If yes, what was the nature of Buddhist architecture during the Gupta, later Gupta and the post-Gupta periods?
- When and how did the cruciform shrine evolve and what was its development pattern?
- What was the nature of a mature cruciform shrine?

## 1.5 Methodology

This research, originally begun in July 2007 as a MPhil project at the University of Liverpool, has continued at Nottingham Trent University.. A key aspect of this research is its interdisciplinary nature involving, besides architectural investigations, studies into the relevant areas of archaeology, anthropology, history, related aspects of early Bengali literature and linguistics and folklore. This study comprise a comprehensive bibliographic collection of the area of study and on relevant subject matters. Although the main focus is on architecture, the interdisciplinary nature of this research has guided the researcher to investigate cognate areas thoroughly, which sometimes provides more information than previously expected.

In order to study the architectural morphology of a particular timeframe it is necessary to identify architectural models of that particular period. In early Buddhist architecture of Bengal where extant examples are no longer present, conjectural virtual reconstruction from architectural remains could provide a useful basis for undertaking further analysis to get a clear perspective on their form and morphology. No evidence of superstructures survive in explored pre-*Pāla* architecture in Bengal. It was not feasible, however, for this study to virtually reconstruct all Buddhist architecture of that period due to time constraint. That is why specific examples of architectural significance were chosen carefully – those that mark important points in the morphological trend. The rationale behind this method is that if modelling the starting and the end points could be achieved and the development pattern is established that could lead to the understanding of the morphology of the architectural form of that particular period. To produce these conjectural models a comprehensive understanding of the socio-political changes, religious advancement and the development in art and architecture is essential.

The research questions will be examined within a carefully defined geographical and socio-political framework. In establishing this framework, we would stress that the proposed project is not a site-study of limited theoretical and historical interest. Rather, we have taken this focus

because the dataset is paradigmatic: the site, region, dynasty and patron provide material which will answer wide-ranging questions about the cultural and socio-political dispensation of medieval Bengal.

The method of addressing the above research questions are as follows:

This research begins with a brief literary survey; to do so, all available archaeological, geographical, historical and social-anthropological resources are reviewed to justify the possible existence of early *vihāra* architecture in Bengal. Possibilities of the existence of *Pahāṛpur*, *Bhāsu* and *Sitākot* *vihāras* during the pre-*Pāla* era are re-examined through architectural analysis. Based on archaeological evidences and available literary data the existence of early architecture of Bengal will be confirmed.

The literature study of the geographical and historical context begins with the Maurya period from around 300 BC and ends with a review of the *Seṇa* period in the thirteenth century. The period following the downfall of the Gupta dynasty (c. 319-495 AD) until the beginning of *Pāla* dynasty (c. 750-1175 AD) is generally considered as the dark period in Bengal's history and the commonly held belief is that not much architectural work took place during this period. Nevertheless, scattered sources clearly indicate a continued economic and cultural growth. That is why this study concentrates on this period and attempts to identify the continuation of Buddhism as well as economic development in Bengal during the later Gupta (c. 500-600 AD) and post-Gupta (c. 650-750 AD) periods. These provide background for further analysis.

The development Buddhist architecture from the ancient time to the study period from other parts of India is also studied in conjunction with associated religious development. Parallel developments are identified in *Nālandā* and *Ajanta* that have had a direct impact over the studied region. The impact of religious development on the architecture is thoroughly followed. Later the *Pāla* (c. 750-1161 AD) and the *Seṇa* (c. 1161-1250 AD) contributed significantly to the

continued sustenance and development of Buddhist art and architecture through the production of a significant quantity of artistic work. The artistic outputs dating from the early-seventh century can hardly be distinguished in style from those of the Gupta period (Asher, 1980: 69-70), which indicates a possibility of Gupta influence on the later architecture of Bengal. Some of the elements used in later Hindu and Islamic architecture were from earlier Buddhist structures (Khare, 2004: 197). Consequently, the superstructure of *Ananda* temple at Pagan, Myanmar is almost identical with the central shrine of the *Pabārpur vihāra*, whereas Angkor Wat in Cambodia has a similar layout and organization as *Pabārpur* (Naqi *et al.*, 1999: 95, 98). These show continuation of the early Buddhist architecture over an extended period and far beyond the geographical territory of Bengal. Later examples of Buddhist architecture in Bengal and the surrounding Indian territories, as well as abroad as far as Java, is comprehensively examined to find continuities of early architectural trends.

This comprehensive literature review provides a backdrop to identify the main research questions and a framework. To develop a wide understanding of the subject, a large number of sites were visited for first-hand information and to find any un-documented examples. Within this framework initial exploration was conducted to collect the field data from published and unpublished sources from Bangladesh. To do so, a first field trip was undertaken in January 2009. This was a month-long trip covering most Buddhist sites of Bangladesh, which was divided into three major zones; northern, eastern, and central and southern.

A study of architectural fragments, votive objects, sculptures, pillars, doorways, lintels, and so on, kept in various museums of the world was also undertaken. The found places of these artifacts provided an indication of the spread of architectural activities in almost the entire study region during that period. It was further noticed through literary evidence (Khare, 2004: 14) and analysis of artifacts that the north Indian language of architecture, the *Nāgara*, was well practiced

during the *Pāla* period (c. 750- 1175 AD) within the study region; hence its possible existence in the early period was examined.

Due to the time constraints field survey was geographically limited within Bangladesh; however, other parts of Bengal, that is the state of West Bengal in India was covered through published material. There, *Chandraketugarh* and *Nandangarh* were studies, identified as significant archaeological sites that played important roles during the period of study. As the research approach is multidisciplinary, much information was collected during the fieldtrips, as well as throughout the research period, some of which have not been directly used in the research outcome, but provide a backdrop to understand the context of the period studied.

For any architectural study, visual and measured documentation is of immense importance. After the analysis of the available literature on the subject the study followed up by collating all extant drawings and photographs in published works and in archives of the Department of Archaeology in Bangladesh. In addition, locally available books and other research works, some of which are in Bengali, were also collected. Large scale drawings of all *vihāra* and shrines have been collected including all recent updates from the Department of Archaeology of Bangladesh, Dhaka. A few unpublished progress reports have been identified and accessed at their local offices such as in Khulna and Comilla. Among them measured drawing of *Bharat Bhayna* collected from Khulna is particularly significant as it helped conduct further architectural analysis.

The next step was the thorough architectural analysis based on these drawings, which required preparing the collected architectural drawings appropriately given that the majority of these were of a primary nature based on archaeological excavation. To develop complete architectural drawings from these primary drawings all *vihāras* and shrines of the study zone were analysed and gaps were identified. The results are presented as conjectural or projected architectural drawings for many sites. During the drawn analysis it was observed that many cruciform shrines belonged

to the lower levels of archaeological excavation, where rectangular upper/later phases had been developed during the *Pāla* and post-*Pāla* periods. Moreover, through the analysis of ground plans a clear morphological development from the early rectangular shrine to the cruciform shrine was also identified.

An interdisciplinary study of the period in question shows presence of developed political and cultural activities within Bengal territory. It further shows continuation of Buddhist practice during the study period and many literary sources show the continued presence of significant, albeit fragmented, art and architectural activities. Morphological development of the ground plan also confirms continuation of architectural activities during that period.

Further architectural analysis was needed to resolve the nature of the superstructure in later Gupta and post-Gupta Buddhist shrines, for which no work exists. . The absence of extant examples within Bengal made the process complex. Virtual reconstruction was chosen to produce conjectural models based on wide-ranging architectural, artistic and cultural data, a method which had been used to create models for their mediaeval counterpart. Computer modelling has a long history in archaeology, with some of the earliest attempts dating back to the 1980s. Pioneering projects, such as John Woodark's recreation of the temple precinct of Roman Bath (England) for the British Broadcasting Corporation demonstrated that computer reconstructions of archaeological sites were possible and highly relevant (Dawson and Levy, 2005: 444). In addition, computer models proved to be an effective means by which researchers could recognize and further analyse where no extant example were present.

The earliest attempts at computer modelling in the field of architectural history of early Bengal can be traced back to the end of the 1990s by Naqi *et al* to reconstruct the superstructure of *Pabārpur viḥāra* (Naqi et al., 1999). Lack of a multidisciplinary approach and the use of limited technical analysis restricted the level of realism that could be attained by this attempt. Later

Rashid enriched this approach with the introduction of material derived from archaeological analysis (Rashid, 2006).

Advances in computing technology have allowed for increasingly sophisticated reconstructions of objects, buildings, and monuments for archaeological sites. In this study virtual reconstruction is used as a representational tool for multidisciplinary analysis, as well as to study the 3D models.

Architectural character of early Buddhist *vihāra* and shrine is identified through archaeological data, paintings, literary references and architectural analysis. Major architectural features of early *vihāras* of Bengal and their socio-cultural impact on later Bengal and abroad have been acknowledged. As indicated earlier, ideally all shrine remains require conjectural reconstruction; however, as this was impossible given the time constraint, and to simplify the process based on the assumptions previously stated, models were created for the start and end points of this particular phase and the morphological trends between these were identified.

As a prototype of Gupta (c. 250-500 AD) Buddhist shrine *Bharat Bhayna* has been reconstructed virtually. A conjectural architectural plan has been proposed for *Damdā pīrsthān Dhībī* and the second shrine of *Bhāsu vihāra* based on the archaeological layout.

In the meantime, through architectural analysis of archaeological drawings and conjectural architectural plans, shrine development of Bengal during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods were recognized which helped identify the gaps for post-Gupta shrines. Evolution of the cruciform shrine from the square formed shrine is identified through this process and confirmation of the presence of an earlier Bengal architecture was established in this process.

Three-dimensional model for the central shrine of *Pabāṛpur vihāra* (early *Pāla*) has been proposed, where previous proposals have been re-examined in the light of recent findings. According to the hypothesis, the starting point (*Bharat Bhayna*), the finishing point (*Pabāṛpur vihāra*) and the development pattern have been recognized which demonstrates a complete transformation of



architectural form. This has resulted in an understanding of the architectural tradition during the period as a whole, identifying the elements, spatial characteristics, functional arrangement that manifest continuity in the tradition.

## 1.6 Structure of study

As the history of early Bengal is still hazy, **Chapter 2** will provide a background to the study through the political analysis of Bengal from the early period to the *Senā* period. Recently, scholars have published few sketches of the post-Gupta dynasties in Bengal which suggest that existing historical ideas need to be reassessed in the light of these new material and the post-Gupta chronology needs to be reorganised. That is why the chronology of later Gupta and post-Gupta Bengal is added in this chapter with additional importance<sup>23</sup>. These historical discussions will provide a clear perspective on the political and cultural trends of the early and mediaeval periods of Bengal.

Next in this chapter I discuss the presence of Buddhism in Bengal. To know about the religious state of Bengal during the Gupta Empire, it is important to understand the socio-political and cultural conditions that existed from the ancient period. That is why, history has been viewed from a religious perspective; especially, the later Gupta and post-Gupta periods have been reviewed in the light of the development of Buddhism in Bengal and the related regions. Later in this chapter I continue on the discussion of the traces of Buddhist *vihāras* constructed during the studied period<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Author published an article with the primary data of this research at the earlier stage; Reza MH. (2010) Post Gupta Bengal - Inscriptions, Coins and Literatures. *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 2: 22-28. Present discussion on dynasties of early and post Gupta is a revised version of that stated paper.

<sup>24</sup> Author published an article with the primary data of this research at the earlier stage as Reza MH. (2008) Bengal Gupta Viharas: Did such a Phenomenon Exist? *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* 3: 211-216.

**Chapter 3** studies the development of Buddhism and Buddhist architecture, where the rise of *vihāra* and its position in Buddhism is briefly discussed. How different Buddhist schools of thought developed and the influence of the *Bhakti* (devotion) movement over these, are key concerns here.

**Chapter 4** explores the evolution and development of Buddhism till the Gupta era and its connection with *vihāra* development. This aims to identify the trend of development during the Guptas in Bengal. Next in this chapter I explore Buddhist architectural development during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods in Bengal through historical, literary and archaeological evidences. Further, I discuss such architecture from archaeological (mainly, sculptural and inscriptional) findings.

The fourth and the fifth chapters are devoted to the architectural analysis of *vihāras* and shrine structures, where in **Chapter 4** I aim to explore the morphology of the ground plan of *vihāras* during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. To do so, typological analysis of *vihāra*, as well as development of the central temple structure will be discussed in detail. Further, this study will explore some influences of the Gupta and post-Gupta Buddhist architecture on the later architecture of Bengal and its peripheral regions. This analysis, in turn, would help trace back the nature of architecture during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods in **Chapter 5**. It will be followed by the 3D analysis of lost super structures through conceptual, literary evidence and design-based analytical approaches to produce a virtual reconstruction of early mediaeval Bengali Buddhist shrine, based on available evidences regarding this architecture. Later, a similar approach will be adopted for the virtual reconstruction of a shrine of late post-Gupta period.

**Chapter 6** constitutes the concluding analysis of the study of the early-Buddhist architecture of Bengal which will provide a brief summary of the outcome of this dissertation. The conclusion will also highlight any limitations of this research, as well as the scope of further study.

It is important to mention here that throughout this study Sanskrit and Bengali terms for Bengali Buddhist architecture are used to connect with the popular terms. A glossary of these terms, along with their popular Bangali and Sanskrit equivalents are presented in the appendix. Throughout the study footnotes are used for further explanation or additional information. The bibliography at the end of this dissertation is a compilation of all available sources on the subject which were referred to in this research. The maps of Bengal are placed before this chapter whereas the drawings and figures used in a chapter follow the text of that chapter.

Political geography conveys a chronological sense of space, location and distance, but also reveals information on territorial evolution of a nation or state, evolution of cultural links and political predominance or lack of it at the given stage of a country's existence (Islam and Hussain, 1997: 717). As the history of early Bengal is still hazy, a discussion on its political geography is needed to give a clear perspective on the social and cultural trends of the early and mediaeval period of Bengal. This chapter will discuss the political geography of early Bengal from the ancient period to the end of the *Śeṇa* dynasty (c. 1096-1225 AD). Recently, scholars have published sketches of post-Gupta dynasties in Bengal which suggest that existing historical ideas need to be reassessed in the light of these new materials and that the post-Gupta chronology needs reorganising. That is why discussion on the chronology of later Gupta (c. 495-675 AD) and post-Gupta (c. 610-750 AD) Bengal is added in this chapter with additional importance.

Next in this chapter I discuss the presence of Buddhism in Bengal. To know about the religious state of Bengal during the Gupta period, it is important to know the condition that existed from the ancient period. That is why history has been viewed from the religious perspective; especially, the later Gupta (c. 495-675 AD) and post-Gupta (c. 610-750 AD) periods have been reviewed in the light of the development of Buddhism in Bengal and the related regions.

The traces of Buddhist architecture constructed during the pre-*Pāla* period are the next issue discussed in this chapter. With the help of literary and archaeological sources the possible existence of Gupta (c. 319-495 AD), later Gupta (c. 495-675 AD) and post-Gupta (c. 610-750 AD) *vihāra* is re-examined that will provide a base for further architectural analysis in subsequent chapters.

## 2.1 Chronology of later Gupta and post-Guptas in Bengal

The history of post-Gupta period is hazy in the annals of ancient Bengal. Little is known about later Gupta rulers of Bengal due to lack of source materials. After the later Gupta, for more than a century – roughly from 650 to 750 AD - the history of Bengal is obscure in the extreme. In general terms the period was marked by *Maṭṣaṇṇaya*<sup>1</sup> - political chaos and confusion. Recently, scholars have published a few sketches of some later dynasties of Bengal that suggest existing historical ideas need to be reassessed in the light of these new material. The following discussion will attempt to throw some light on that obscure part of Bengal's history through inscriptions, coins and literature.

After the imperial Gupta, at the beginning of the six century continuous Huna<sup>2</sup> invasions, the sudden entry and exit of Yashodharman on the political stage of northern India sends great shock waves through eastern India. Simultaneously, the Maukharis rose to prominence in the central part of northern India during later Gupta period and held sway over *Magadha*, and western and northern Bengal. There was a long-drawn-out struggle between the Maukharis and the later Guptas for the possession of *Magadha* (southern Bihar) and parts of western and northern Bengal.

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<sup>1</sup> Ancient Indian treatise *Kautilya's Arthashastra* defines the Sanskrit term *Matsyanyayam* (*matsya+nyayam*) as 'When the law of punishment is kept in abeyance, it gives rise to such disorder as is implied in the proverb of fishes, ie, the larger fish swallows a smaller one, for in the absence of a magistrate, the strong will swallow the weak'. In general, the condition of Bengal in the century following the death of Śaśaṅka and before the rise of the *Pāla* (c 750-850 AD) has been described as *Maṭṣaṇṇaya*.

<sup>2</sup> The Huna were a part of the Hephthalite group, who established themselves in Afghanistan and Pakistan by the first half of the fifth century, with their capital at Bamiyan. They sometimes call themselves "Hono" on their coins, but it seems that they are similar to the Huns who invaded the Western world.

### 2.1.1 Later Gupta rulers of Bengal

Buddhist *Mahāyāna* literary work *Arya-Manjūsri-Mulākalpa* throws some light on the later Gupta rulers. According to this literature, after *Budhagupta* (ruled AD 476 to 495), two kings of the Gupta line were crowned one in *Magadha* and other in *Gauda* (Mookerji, 2007: 120). The *Bhitri* and *Nālandā* seals of *Kumāragupta* III and a large number of gold coins make quite clear that *Narasimbhagupta* was crowned in *Magadha* after *Budhagupta*.

Though the extent of *Narasimbhagupta*'s reign is uncertain, clay sealing excavated from monastery site I of *Nālandā* provides some information regarding his territory. His title '*Paramabhogavāṣa Mahārājādhirāja*<sup>3</sup>' indicates his exercise of authority beyond the *Magadha* region (Willis, 2005) - to be specific, power over part of Bengal. Earn Posthumous stone pillar inscription (510 AD) of *Gopārājā*<sup>4</sup> mentions *Bhānugupta*, governor of Malwa during *Narasimbhagupta*, was defeated by a Huna king Toramana who carried his expedition up to *Magadha* and compelled *Narasimbhagupta* to retreat to Bengal (Mookerji, 2007). *Narasimbhagupta*'s 'archer type' gold coin was unearthed from different parts of Bengal (Chakravarti, 2008a) also testifies his reign over there. Most possibly he reigned over *Puṇḍravardhana* (northern Bengal).

After Toramana, the Hunas were led by his son Mihirakula. According to Hsuan-Tsang, *Balāditya* vanquished Mihirakula (Beal, 1844) around 530 AD (Weiner, 1963) and recaptured *Magadha*. This confirms that, *Narasimbhagupta* was not completely extinguished and he was a powerful king during his reign over Bengal.

On the other hand, *Guṇaigarh* copperplate inscription brought to light one more name of the eastern Bengal Gupta king, that of *Vaiṇyagupta* (Mookerji, 2007). The date of the inscription is

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<sup>3</sup> A royal ruler's title on the Indian subcontinent, roughly meaning 'great king of kings', a prestigious indication of the princely state's particularly high rank

<sup>4</sup> *Gopārājā* was a feudatory of *Narasimbhagupta* and fought against Huna king Toramana in the battle of Eran in AD 510.

given in numeral and words, i.e., Gupta year 188 (507 AD); *Vāinyagupta* lived at the time of *Narasiṃhagupta*. The Buddhist text *Arya-Manjuśrī-Mulākalpa* also refers to a king called ‘*Va*’, which may point to *Vāinyagupta* as a contemporary of *Narasiṃhagupta* (Jayaswal, 1934). That Guṇaigaṛh copperplate was soldered with a royal seal bearing the legend of ‘*Māhārāja Śrī Vāinyagupta*’ signifies his sovereignty over atleast a part of Bengal. He was also named on the *Nālandā* seal, which states him as a son of *Kumāragupta* II (ruled 473 - 476 AD) (Willis, 2005).

The above mentioned inscription also states that *Vāinyagupta*’s camp of victory was located at ‘*Kripura*’, which indicates the location of his headquarters was in south Tripura. Thus the sphere of his authority lay far away from *Puṇḍravardhana* and *Magadha*, in remote eastern Bengal. Numismatic evidences also support his presence in this region (Chakravarti, 2008a). Three gold coins of the archer type have been discovered from *Samatāṭa* bearing the name ‘*Vāinya*’. Most possibly, he exercised his authority over the parts of Bengal, therefore over *Śrīhaṭṭa*, *Samatāṭa* and *Harikeṭṭa* kingdoms, and his reign may be extended to c. 515 AD (Willis, 2005).

During the reign of *Narasiṃhagupta*, according to Eran stone pillar inscription, *Bhānugupta* lost Malwa to the Hunas. Most probably a part of the later Guptas were ruling there as feudatories (Sen, 1999). Perhaps for this reason from *Balāditya* II to *Adityasena*, who were in subordinate positions, were absent on *Arya-Manjuśrī-Mulākalpa* (Jayaswal, 1934).

Three Mandsaur inscriptions of Yasodharman refer to Yasodharman as ‘Vikramaditya’, who freed Malwa and neighbouring regions from the Huna king, Mihirakula. Early history of Yasodharman is shrouded in obscurity and from whatever we know, he probably belonged to the Aulikara family whose members ruled in Malwa. Yasodharman’s sway extended over a wide area bounded by the Himalayas in the north, Mahendra mountains in the south, the Brahmaputra river in the east and the ocean in the west. But the flashing brilliance of this great conqueror rose and fell like a meteor between 530 and 540 AD (Sen, 1999).

The Apshad inscription refers to glowing campaigns of *Jivitagupta* in the Himalaya region and south-western Bengal, whose period probably ranged from c. 525 to 540 AD. *Jivitagupta* appears to be more important than his father *Harshagupta* (490 to 505 AD) or his grandfather *Krishnagupta* (505 to 525 AD), who were based in *Magadha*. *Jivitagupta* extend his territory beyond *Magadha* and reigned over *Puṇḍravardhaṇa* and *Vaṅga*.

*Kumāragupta* III, son and successor of *Jivitagupta*, ruled between 540 and 560 AD. He is described as ‘*Paramadaivata Paramabbattaraka Mahārājādhirāja*’ as well as ‘*Prithivi-pati*’, meaning ‘Ruler of the earth’ according to Damodarpur (no. 5) copperplate inscription of the Gupta Era 224 (543 AD) (Mookerji, 2007). It also states that *Puṇḍravardhaṇa* was a ‘*Bhukti*’<sup>5</sup> of *Kumāragupta* III and its governor was his son. The Apshad inscription informs that *Kumāragupta* III decisively defeated the Maukhari king, Isanavarmana in AD 554 which eliminated the presentation of the Maukharis from the central Gangetic valley and let him extend towards Prayaga.

The struggle between the Maukharis and the later Gupta to control the Gangetic valley was continued in the reign of *Damodargupta*, son of *Kumāragupta* III. *Damodargupta* lost his life without achieving any decisive victory over the Maukharis. He was succeeded by his son *Mahāsenāgupta*, who achieved a single success at the beginning of his career. In all probability he defeated Sushitavarman (ruled c. 590 - 595 AD), the father of king Bhaskarvarman (ruled c. 600 - 650 AD) of Kamrupa and advanced as far as Brahmaputra river. However, *Mahāsenāgupta* met misfortune in the later part of his reign. Both Bhaskarvarman and the Chalukya king Kirtivarman (567-597 AD) attacked *Mahāsenāgupta*. Kirtivarman subdued *Aṅga*, *Vaṅga*, *Kaliṅga* and *Magadha*. Furthermore, in all likelihood *Mahāsenāgupta* was defeated by the Tibetan king Strong Tan Gampo (581- 600 AD), enabling Maukhari king Sarvavarman to occupy some territories of his kingdom. According to *Rajmālā*, the chronicles of Tipra dynasty, King Himti (118<sup>th</sup> king of Twipra) took over a part of Bengal in 590 AD. To mark this victory, the Twipra era, known as Tring, started

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<sup>5</sup> *Bhukti* was an administrative unit during the Gupta era.



from that day. The situation was made critical by internal discord. Sasanka the *Gauda* ruler, not only founded an independent kingdom, but also took over *Magadha*, the eastern territories of *Mahāsenāgupta*. He, therefore, was pushed eastwards to *Vidīśā* where he spent the rest of his days until his death in 601 AD.

At the height of his power the north Indian king *Harshavarḍhana* (590-647 AD), ruled the Punjab, Gujarat, Bengal, Orissa and the entire Indo-Gangetic plain after the downfall of the Imperial Guptas. According to Apsa inscription *Harsha* invested *Mādhavagupta*, son of *Mahāsenāgupta*, as the governor of *Magadha* in the later part of his reign. *Harsha*'s overlordship overshadows the later Guptas for nearly half a century. After the downfall of *Harsha*, *Mādhavagupta* ruled for a brief period and was succeeded by his son *Ādityeṇa* in 650 AD.

*Ādityeṇa* was a powerful king titled as '*Mahārājādhirāja*' and ruled over an extensive kingdom. According to Apsad inscription, his empire included *Magadha*, *Aṅga* and Bengal, whereas *Arya-Manjuśrī-Mulākālpa* describes *Ādityeṇa* as master of the central Gangetic valley who repeated the feat of *Śamudragupta* in reaching the South, up to the Chola country. This source also refers to him as *Gauda* King (Jayaswal, 1934) and that his reign came to an end in 675 AD (Sen, 1999).

### 2.1.2 Political chaos of Post Gupta Bengal

After the decline of the Imperial Gupta, a succession of independent kingdoms emerged in different parts of Bengal. *Gauda* emerged incorporating *Puṇḍravardhana/Vareṇḍra* and *Rārḥ* as independent entity. Whereas *Vaṅga/ Vaṅga-samataṭa, Samataṭa, Harikeṭa, Śribhaṭṭa* can be traced from later inscriptions and literatures. Most probably, post Gupta Bengal observed two or three parallel dynastic line.

Among these dynastic lines, the *Vaṅga* rulers, especially *Gopāchandra* was contemporary to *Narasimhāgupta* according to Eran stone pillar inscription of 510 AD. Faridpur copperplate inscription (Year 18) and Mallasarul copperplate inscription describe *Gopāchandra* as ‘*Mahārājādhirāja*’ indicating him as a sovereign king (Mookerji, 2007). He carved out an independent kingdom in Bengal after the downfall of the imperial Gupta which included a wider area of *Vaṅga*; comprising Faridpur in eastern Bengal and Bardhaman in western Bengal. Mallasarul copper-plate refers a land grant of *Gopāchandra* at *Vaṛḍhamanabhukṭi*<sup>6</sup> (Bardhaman and Bankura districts in the Indian state of West Bengal) which proves his power over southern part of West Bengal, whereas Jayrampur copper-plate bears testimony to his flourishing rule over *Daṇḍabhukṭi* (southwest Bengal and the bordering area of Orissa). It is highly probable that he ruled from Kotalipara in present day Gopalganj district of Bangladesh (Khan, 2007). However, *Vāṇiyagupta* of *Samataṭa* was preceded by this king. Probably *Gopāchandra*’s reign extend until c. 540 AD.

The Faridpur copper-plate inscription refers to another *Vaṅga* king named *Dharmāditya*. The first inscription refers him as ‘*Prithivīmapratiratha*’ (the invincible ruler of the earth), whereas the

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<sup>6</sup> During the Gupta period *Rārḥ* was divided into several smaller regions (*Bhukṭis*); such as *Kaṅkagrāmbhukṭi, Vaṛḍhamanabhukṭi* and *Daṇḍabhukṭi*. *Vaṛḍhamanabhukṭi* was spread across what are now Bardhaman and Bankura districts in the Indian state of West Bengal.

second one refers him as ‘*Mahārājādhīrāja*’ indicating him as a sovereign king; his time in power extended until *c.* 570 AD. Besides *Gopāchandra* and *Dharmāditya*, another Faridpur copper-plate mentions a third independent ruler of *Vaṅga* named *Samacharadeva*, but very little is known about him. It is most likely *Samacharadeva* exercised his power over *Vaṅga* until *Śaśaṅka*’s reign - a prominent king of Bengal - who was crowned in *c.* 600 AD.

The names of two independent chiefs, *Lokanātha* and *Jibodhāranrāja*, are known from *Tipperah* copper-plate of *Lokanātha*; they were contemporary rulers of parts of eastern Bengal. Vottashali dated the above copper-plate as from the Gupta era 244 (corresponding to 564 AD), perhaps *Lokanātha* reigned over north-eastern part of *Samatāṭa*/*Śrīhaṭṭa* around the second half of sixth century AD (Khan, 2004). Among the names of the kings given in the *Lokanātha* plate, *Śrīnātha* is common with Kalapur copper plate of *Murundanātha* found same region. It is very likely that *Śrīnātha* was the common ancestor of both *Lokanātha* and *Murundanātha* of Kalapur plate. Similarities between these two copper plates, their common ‘*nātha*’ ending names suggest a family link. Perhaps *Murundanātha* was a successor of *Lokanātha* and reigned around the second half of sixth century AD.

*Jibodhāranrāja* was the founder of the *Rāja* dynasty according to Kailan copper-plate inscription of *Śrīdhāraṇarāja*. This copper-plate introduces another line of rulers of south eastern Bengal and mentions the ruling king *Śrīdhāraṇarāja* as ‘*Parama-Vaisnava*’ and successor of *Jibodhāranrāja*. Both the *Rāja* kings are styled as ‘*Samatateshvara*’ (the king of *Samatāṭa*). These record supplies no more significant information about them or their kingdom. Both *Jibodhāranrāja*, *Śrīdhāraṇarāja* minted good quality gold coins based on *śatamāṇa* weight standard of *Samatāṭa* trend (Chakravarti, 2008a) and their capital was *Devapaṇvaṭa*.

Two dated inscriptions in the Midnapore copper-plates (RY-8 & RY-19) and another undated copper-plate from Egra provides information about *Śaśaṅka*, the first important king of ancient

Bengal. Madhavavarma's<sup>7</sup> copper plate dated 619 AD, *Harshavarḍhana's* Banskhera and Madhuvan copper-plates and Nidhanpur copper-plate of Kamarupa king Bhaskara Varman also contains information about him. Contemporary literary accounts of Banabhatta, Chinese pilgrim *Hsüan-tsang* and Buddhist text *Arya-Manjuśrī-Mulākalpa* gave *Śaśaṅka* a prominent place in the history of this region. Both the inscriptions and the literary accounts described *Śaśaṅka* as the ruler of *Gauda*. By the beginning of the seventh century AD he had captured power in *Gauda*. *Karṇasuvarṇa* was his capital and he was the first known king of Bengal who attempted to establish a north Indian empire.

Like other rulers of *Vaṅga*, *Śaśaṅka* minted gold coins on *suvarṇa* standard. However, from *Samataṭa* area *śatamāṇa*<sup>8</sup> standard gold coins have been discovered which were meant for circulation in the *Samataṭa* area only. Thus *Śaśaṅka's* gold coin of two varieties and weight standards shows his exercise of power over at least two different zones of Bengal, *Gauda-Vaṅga* and *Samataṭa*. It is generally believed that he ruled until c. 625 AD.

According to the Vappa-Ghoshavata copper-plate of Jayanaga, *Karṇasuvarṇa* served as the administrative capital for a king named Jayanaga. It is significant that Jayanaga issued debased gold coins of *suvarṇa*<sup>9</sup> standard which appear to have seen used in *Vaṅga*. Probably he ruled the *Vaṅga* region after *Śaśaṅka*.

Buddhist text *Arya-Manjuśrī-Mulākalpa* confirmed that after *Śaśaṅka* the state of *Gauda* was paralyzed and in the absence of a strong king, the feudal vassals each one was independent and autonomous (Jayaswal, 1934).

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<sup>7</sup> Madhavavarma was *Śaśaṅka's* subordinate king whose domination was over Ganjam/Orissa.

<sup>8</sup> *Śatamāṇa* standard equals to 100 Rattis or 11 grams of gold.

<sup>9</sup> The *Suvarṇa* weight standard suggests coin of 144 grains or approximately 9.2 gms of gold.

*Harsha* formed an alliance with *Bhaṣkaravarman*, king of Kamarupa, and marched on *Śaśaṅka*. Although he defeated his rival, the result was indecisive as *Śaśaṅka* continued to rule much of his kingdom. After the death of *Śaśaṅka*, *Harsha* was able to bring Bihar, Kannauj and northern Bengal under his rule, whereas *Bhaṣkaravarman* conquered the remainder of *Śaśaṅka*'s kingdom. *Bhaṣkaravarman*'s Nidhanpur copper plate, issued from his camp at *Karṇasuvarṇa* testifies his control over this region for a short period.

The *Maināmati* copper plate of Balabhatta referred Khadgodyama as '*kḥadgakehyato*', meaning 'known as *kḥadga* (sword)'. While Deulbadi image inscription titled him as '*nripadhirāja*' indicating his status as a powerful king and Ashrafpur copper plate II of Devakhadga referred him as '*ksitiriyamabbhitanirjita*', which means he 'conquered this world fearlessly' (Islam, 2008). These data suggest that probably Khadgayama was a proficient warrior, especially in sword fighting who fought fearlessly to carve out a kingdom or established himself firmly as a powerful king. Khadgodyama was the first king and founder of the Khadga dynasty, who paved the way for a strong paramount dynasty in southeast Bengal. His reign perhaps ranged from c. 625 to 640 AD.

Jatakhadga was the next king of this dynasty according to Ashrafpur copper plate inscriptions of Devakhadga. The same inscription mentioned that '*sarvari samgha vidhastha surabhava trinamiba maruta*', 'he destroyed the multitudes of all his enemies through heroism as a piece of straw by the wind' (Islam, 2008). Probably he had to fight against his enemies to consolidate his position or to extend his kingdom. Yet no more plates have been discovered which may be used as a source for reconstructing this ruler's complete history. It is possible that his reign extended until 654 AD.

Devakhadga, son of Jatakhadga, became king after his father. Ashrafpur copper plates and *Sālban* *vihāra* copper plates marked as '*Śrīmatdevakhadga*' testifying that Devakhadga issued these copper plates. On the other hand a number of gold coins discovered which also bear the same legend. Devakhadga is also referred to in the Ashrafpur copper plate I as '*ksitipala*' (king) while plate II gives title '*narapati*' (king). He is also referred in the copper plate of *Balabhatta*. All the copper plates

and coins bear indication of his powerful reign but none bear any titles indicating status as paramount ruler, such as ‘*Mahārājādhīrajā*’ or ‘*parambhaṭṭaraka*’. Ashrafpur copper plates mentioned that Devakhadga conquered his enemies; probably he had to fight against his neighbouring kings to extend his dominion and to conquer *Samataṭa*.

Ashrafpur copper plate refers *Rājārājā* as a son of Devakhadga, probably who became king after his father. Though no copper plate has been discovered bearing his reign, but coins and foreign account throw some light about his ruling in *Samataṭa*. *Rājabbhaṭṭa* issued Gupta archer type gold coins; seven such gold coins have been discovered from southeast Bengal which is metrological, symbolically and stylistically same as Devakhadga’s coins bears the testimony that both of them were kings of the same dynasty. These numismatic evidences proofs him as a powerful independent king, however no more activity is known of this king due to lack of source materials. Probable range of his reign was 673 to 690 AD.

*Balabbhaṭṭa*, another son of Devakhadga, probably became king after *Rājabbhaṭṭa*. *Sālban Vihāra* Copper plate and a number of gold and silver coins discovered from the *Maināmati* area represent him as a powerful king. According to this inscription his capital was at *Devapaṇṇaṭa* but it is very difficult to determine the extent of the sway of his kingdom from it. Legend ‘*Vaṅgaśrī*’ from *Balabbhaṭṭa*’s coin suggests his sway could have been over a part of *Vaṅga*, contiguous to *Samataṭa*.

Considering the stylistic affinity with other Khadga coins, *Prithubhata* and *Sarvanada* may be considered as the kings of the Khadga dynasty. Probably they became successors after *Balabbhaṭṭa*. But it is very difficult to determine their exact chronological position at this level.

Although identified archaeological and literary material till date are not sufficient to give a clear view of post-Gupta Bengal, based on recent published sketches of scholars a few post-Gupta dynasties of Bengal have been identified here which suggest a reorganization of the chronology of the post-Gupta period. In discussing the post-Gupta rulers’ chronology and their dominations,

my primary aim has been to question the state of political chaos and confusion (*Maṭṣaṇṇaya*) that is generally regarded to have characterised this post-Gupta period in Bengal. This section was an attempt to throw light on that obscure part of Bengal's history through a discussion of available inscriptions, coins and literature. Contrary to established main-stream views, Bengal appears to have has a complex but fairly stable governance through a number of regional rulers, who also extended patronage to Buddhist monasteries.

## 2.2 Social and cultural life of Bengal during Gupta and post Gupta period

Architectural design has its effect on the manner in which people live (Yancey, 1974: 68) and it is also clear that socio-cultural and economic factors are major determinants of shaping life and architecture. To understand architecture, therefore, it is important to understand the manner in which life and livelihood had been shaped. And to know the lifestyle knowing the social and economic factors of that particular timeframe is significant. Understanding the nature of social and cultural life in Bengal during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods is key to appreciating the architecture of that period. This will be accomplished here by discussing aspects of the prevailing political system, economic situation, religion, ethnicity, education and the location of urban culture.

### Political

Earlier discussions on the political geography of Bengal shows that the imperial political system of was supported by a developed bureaucracy. The king – the head of state – determined all decision-making, while such decisions made into law and fiscal policies were propagated to the far reaches of the state through a fairly sophisticated system of representatives and officials acting on behalf of the king.

In the pre-Maurya times of early Buddhism, most parts of Bengal had small settlements which were conducive to independent development. Gradually, with the growth of population, settlements proliferated into larger village communities of landowners and peasant proprietors (Darian, 1970: 66). Later, in the post-Maurya period, feudalism developed alongside landlordism (Sircar, 1969: 32). Analyzing copperplate land-grants inscriptions issued during Gupta and post-Gupta rule, it is evident that there were well-established imperial governments of graded territorial hierarchy consisting of a number of local government establishments at the district, city and village levels (Morrison, 1970: 150). Within this top-down system the feudal landlords used to work as the local representatives of the king.



In particular during the Gupta period there was a trend of having local *rajas* as feudatories (*samantha*) of a *maharajadhiraja*.<sup>10</sup> A growth in the number of feudatories in the post-Gupta period can be inferred from contemporary epigraphic records. Gradually many local *rajas* become relatively independent and began having a number of feudatories themselves.<sup>11</sup> Having closer connection to the localities, the local *rajas* contributed more directly to local development; as a result, from the Gupta period onwards we notice the establishment of quasi-urban settlements beyond the boundary of the capital city.

The empire was then divided into convenient administrative units. The largest unit was the kingdom, known as the *deśa*. A province was the next stage, which was called *bhukti*<sup>12</sup>, which was further subdivided into districts known as *viśaya*. There were *Uparika-Mahārāja* as the head of a *Bhukti*, under him was *Viśayapati* for the *viśaya* (Mookerji, 2007: 50,79). Although the Gupta and post-Gupta empires were administered by a well-established imperial bureaucracy with hierarchical local government structures, their civil administration was mild and benevolent.<sup>13</sup> Taxation was also light (Boulting, 1920: 53), which helped to develop local businesses. The inscriptions further show that the merchants enjoyed considerable freedom and the state did not attempt to intervene in the market dynamics by exerting state control over the market forces (Jahan, 2005). This freedom helped some merchants to become important figures within the society and their status could be understood by their representation and participation in the system of administration.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For example, *Mahārāja Rudradeva* and *Mahārāja Vijayaseṇa* were feudatories of Vāinya Gupta (Thakur, 1978: 71).

<sup>11</sup> *Śaśāṅka* and *Lokanātha* were feudatories before becoming independent kings (Thakur, 1978: 71).

<sup>12</sup> During Kumara Gupta I *Puṇḍravardhana* was a *Bhukti*.

<sup>13</sup> Hiuen-Tsung describes this nature of the civil administration in some detail (Beal, 1844: 87).

<sup>14</sup> *Sārthavāha*, representative of the guild of merchants, used to be a member of local city committees.

## Economic

From the ancient time Bengal's economy was primarily based on agriculture, the beginnings of which, as in the rest of India, can be traced back to the pre-historic past. In the initial stage both settlement and agriculture followed the courses of the great river systems of the province, which acted as powerful agents of revitalisation by enriching the soil. Copper-plate inscriptions of fifth, sixth and seventh centuries record a steady extension of the areas under cultivation (Ahmad, 2005: 7). There is no doubt that during the Gupta and post-Gupta period the bulk of the population had taken to cultivation as the chief means of livelihood.<sup>15</sup>

Available sources do not provide ample detail to draw any comprehensive picture of agricultural practice; however, it is certain that paddy (*dhānya*) was cultivated from remote antiquity as the staple food crop of the people (Ahmad, 2005: 8).<sup>16</sup> Archaeological excavations have established the presence of "well-established village cultures based on the cultivation of two crops a year by rotation method" in the Ganga basin as early as 2000 BC (Ray, 2006: 77). The fertility of the Bengal delta along with the rotation methods helped to produce abundant crops in Bengal, which was more than sufficient for local needs. Surplus rice was exported to countries near and far, and according to the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* there were considerable demand of rice in the Roman Empire.

Probably sugarcane was important among other food crops cultivated in Bengal during the mediaeval period. It was cultivated in Bengal from very early times. *Suśruta*<sup>17</sup> mentions a particular

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<sup>15</sup>Hiuen-Tsang describes that in all parts of Bengal's countryside was regularly and assiduously cultivated, and produced grains, flowers and fruits in abundance (See: Beal, 1844: 80).

<sup>16</sup>The earliest settlement phase of Mangalkot dating from 1200 to 600 BC provided evidence for the use of iron, both wild and domesticated animals and the consumption of rice. See, (Ray, 2006: 75)

<sup>17</sup>*Suśruta* (about 1500 BCE) was an ancient Indian sage who was one of the principal contributors to Ayurveda, a system of medicine and lifestyle developed in Ancient India.

variety of sugarcane called *Pundra*; it is probable that from the term *Paundraka* the names *Paundia*>*Paunda*>*Pundi* and so on, may have been derived (Ahmad, 2005: 8-9), and most scholars agree that it was named so because it was grown in the *Pundra* country (North Bengal). Besides the above, contemporary records mention a wide variety of crops grown in different parts of Bengal.

The textile industry of Bengal is very old; from the account of *Arthashastra*, it appears that the Bengali's excelled in weaving textiles and was very well-known for the best cotton fabrics (*vabgakamsvetamsnigdamdukulam*) (Chottopadhy, 2006). It is well known that the finest cotton fabric of Bengal, the world famous *muslin*, was exported to the Roman and the Chinese empires and is mentioned in Ptolemy's Geography and the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, as well as, by the ancient Chinese travellers. This *muslin* industry continued as late as the colonial period; *Ain-I-Akbari* shows that a huge quantity of the finest sort of Muslin was procured at Dhaka for the use of the Mughal emperors, and later, similar descriptions can be identified within English writings.<sup>18</sup> With some certainty it can be argued that textile was an important industry during Gupta and post-Gupta Bengal, and that it was exported to foreign countries through sea and land routes.

*Kautilya's Arthashastra* and Jain *Acharang sutra* speaks about the availability of diamond in Bengal, *Arthashastra* further discusses the silver from Gaur (Ahmad, 2005: 5), whereas the *Periplus* mentions availability of pearl and gold in Bengal,<sup>19</sup> although the available gold was not that good a quality (Huntingford, 1980: 55). In the seventh century AD, Hiuen-Tsung, during his visit to Bengal, also observed the use of gold and pearls. Probably all these precious minerals were available in Bengal

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<sup>18</sup> Ralph Fitch (1586) described Sonargaon as a brisk commercial centre, where *muslin* produced – especially its finest variety called *khasa* – had worldwide reputation.

<sup>19</sup> The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* is a Greco-Roman text written in Greek, describing navigation and trading opportunities along the coast of the Red Sea and others along Northeast Africa and the Indian subcontinent. The text has been ascribed to different dates between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, but a mid-1st century date is now the most commonly accepted.

during the mediaeval period. A further important mediaeval Bengali trade was the transaction of war horses to Malay Peninsula by sea.

### Trade and commerce

The multitude of rivers provided a vibrant riverine transportation network, which afforded easy communication for internal trade during the mediaeval period. A profusion of varied mediaeval imagery also provides evidence that the rivers formed a part of the cultural landscape of the communities in Bengal from the ancient period (Ray, 2006: 77). Most mediaeval cities were located by the river and archaeological findings also support that. This trend continued till the early modern period when most *gonj*<sup>20</sup> were established by the river site.

Bengal's location on the bay of Bengal offered her the opportunity of participating in sea-borne trade and commerce, a tradition which seems to have been built up from as early as the second millennium BC (Chakravarti, 2008b). The *Periplus* states that from a market town of Bengal, known as *Ganges*, exports such as pearls, *muslin*, and spikenard were carried in vessels. The account of the *Periplus* was confirmed by the *Milinda-Pañha* (1st century AD) which refers to the overseas trade between *Vanga* and remote parts of the world.<sup>21</sup>

*Tāmraliptī* was an ancient port and famous emporium of Bengal. Throughout the mediaeval period three principal routes of overseas trade radiated from *Tāmraliptī*, one to Burma and beyond via the Arakan coast, a second route to the Malaya Peninsula and the Far East via Paloura near Chicacole, and a third route which passed along *Kalinga* and the *Coromandal* coasts to South India and Ceylon (Ramachandran, 1951: 228). It is possible that there was one more key port in Bengal besides *Tāmraliptī*, which was also the capital of the people whom Ptolemy and other Greeks and

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<sup>20</sup>Commercial center developed based on the local *bat* (weekly market).

<sup>21</sup> The *Milinda-Pañha* (Questions of *Milinda*) is a Buddhist text which was written between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

Romans called Gangarides. It was not mentioned in Indian literature because it was not on the main route to *Pāṭaliputra* (Monahan, 1924: 15).

On the other hand, study on the land trade of mediaeval Bengal still remains in its infancy. Most inscriptions and literary document connect Bengal with the main land of India through river transport, although it is clear that these routes later converted to land routes that connected Bengal with other parts of India, China, Arabia and the Western world. Land connection with the eastern part of India, especially with Assam, was probably ancient, though no significant finding have been identified yet. During the early-modern period or possibly even in the late-mediaeval period there were three routes from Assam to Bengal: one by water and the other two by land (Ahmad, 1990: 176). Even there is a possibility that south-east Bengal had trading contacts with areas like southern China, Pegu, Burma and South East Asia through a land route via Arakan (Thakur, 1987: 202).

## Towns

Early historic pre-urban to urban centres of Bengal have been identified in *Mahāsthān* (*Puṇḍravardhana*), *Chāṇḍraketurāḥ*, *Tāmraliptī*, and *Baṅgarāḥ* through associations of typical Early Historical Ganga Valley culture in the form of coins, terracotta art and the ceramics, especially the Northern Black Polished Ware (Dasgupta, 2005). Many of these cities persist for more than thousand years and some urban structures exhibit many consecutive construction phases.<sup>22</sup> It is reasonable to believe that during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods these cities were thriving. From an archaeological perspective, when almost all early Indian urban centres either disappeared or decayed after the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods, Bengal had continuation of urban tradition into the early medieval period (Thakur, 1987: 207). Major urban centres of early Bengal like

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<sup>22</sup> Most mediaeval *vihāra* sites exhibit many construction phases; *Anandavihāra* of *Maināmati* has as many as six construction or reconstruction phases.

*Puṇḍranagar*, Kotivarsa, Mangalkot, *Karṇasuvarṇa*, *Rāmāvatī* and Vikrampuṛa appear to have combined the functions of politico-administrative and commercial centres (Chakravarti, 2008b).

On the other hand, during the Gupta period many small towns developed, primarily as *viṣaya*, far from the capital cities. Large cities used to have a local administration representing the local people along with *viṣayapati*, as the king's representative.<sup>23</sup> *Viṣayapati* was associated with and supported by advisory non-officials representing local interests, such as, (1) *nāgara-śreṣṭhi*, like the present day mayor, (2) *sārthavāha*, representative of the guild of merchants, (3) *prathama-kulika*, chief of the guild of artisans and (4) *prathama-kayastha*, chief of the union of writers (Mookerji, 2007: 80).

## Religion

The Gupta period has often been heralded as an age of religious toleration and the Gupta kings extolled as generous patrons of a variety of religious sects. Numismatic and literary evidences clearly show religious pluralism during the Gupta and post Gupta periods of the principal religions of the time: Vaishnavism, Śaivism, Buddhism and Jainism.

According to Jain tradition during *Mahāvīra*, Rāṅh area of Bengal was one of the four place where Jainism spread at the earlier stage (Shah, 1987: 28). But the first epigraphic evidence of the existence of Jainism in Bengal is a copper plate inscription at *Pahāṇpur* dated to the Gupta year 159 (AD 479). It mentions the existence of a *viḥāra* established by the disciples of Nirgrantha Guhanandi. Later Hiuen-Tsang wrote that the majority among the non-Buddhists in *Puṇḍravardhana* were *Digambara Nirgranthas* (Jains). Recent analysis on the Gupta-era religious antiquities found at Tamluk and its vicinity shows the presence of antiquities associated with Jainism (Jahan, 2005). However, no significant artifacts or copperplate inscriptions of the Pala and Sena kings mention the persistence of Jainism in Bengal. In that case, it can be assumed that there

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<sup>23</sup>Damodarpur copper-plate gives some interesting information of the local administration during the Gupta period.

were strong influences of Jainism in Bengal during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods which appear to have abruptly ended immediately following the post-Gupta period.

As traditional Hindu monarchs the Gupta kings were strong supporters of Vedic religious beliefs and rituals. At the same time, as they were active participants in the *bhakti* (devotional) movement centered on Vishnu, they promoted Vaishnavism at state level, such as could be evidenced from the copper coins of Chandra Gupta II, which declare his religion of Vaishnavism in the figure of Guruda on its reverse. Indeed, the rapid spread of Vaishnavism in Gupta times was due, to a large extent, to their patronage (McKnight, 1977: 727).

As mentioned earlier, Gupta patronage was not only towards the Vaishnav religion; there are many inscriptions that shows their contribution towards Buddhist *vihāra*.<sup>24</sup> In the post-Gupta periods most kings were Buddhist in Bengal which allows the Bengal *vihāras* to enjoy proper royal patronage for a brief period, a privilege that continues till the end of the Pala period. The tolerant nature of the Gupta kings encouraged donors to donate towards Buddhist religious activities,<sup>25</sup> making many local feudatory *rājās* important donors to Buddhist *vihāras*. *Mahārājā* Rudradatta, who was a vassal of Vāinya Gupta, made a royal gift towards a Buddhist *vihāra*, making it the earliest record of a Hindu king making gift to a Buddhist *vihāra* (Mookerji, 2007: 123) – a sign that Buddhism was gaining in importance within the society. In the later Gupta and post-Gupta periods as these feudal kings become independent their contribution towards Buddhism burgeons, especially in the latter period when most Bengal kings were Buddhists. In the meantime, local contribution also increased significantly, which can be seen through the contribution of their local feudatories and merchants.

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<sup>24</sup>Contribution of Gupta kings towards Buddhism was discussed in Buddhism in Bengal during Gupta and later period.

<sup>25</sup> A minister of Chandragupta II donated land and money towards the *saṅgha*.

During Fa-Huien's visit *Hīnayāna* was the dominating form of Buddhism all over India; however, *Mahāyāna* took over very fast. Hiuen-Tsung found *Mahāyāna* as the major religion of Bengal during his visit in the post-Gupta period. In the early-medieval period, *Mahāyāna* incorporated Tantra, which was of autochthonous origin. This development led to the rise of a new Buddhist sect called *Vajrayāna*, which was based on the concept of mystical power derived from ritual exercise in the form of meditation (Jha, 2003: 1). The similarity of *Vajrayāna* with Hinduism played an important role in minimising the liturgical distance between the two religions, paving the way for the gradual acceptance of the Buddha as an *avatar* of Vishnu, leading to the eventual subsumption of Buddhist thought within Hinduism.



### 2.3 Buddhism in Bengal during Gupta and later period

To know about the religious state of Bengal during the Guptas, it is important to know the existing condition from the ancient period. The reconstruction of the religious history of Bengal in the ancient period, more precisely the period preceding the beginning of the Imperial Guptas, is difficult to achieve due to paucity of sources. For this period we have to depend on very scanty references in the Vedic, Epic and Puranic literature, where Bengal was known to be inhabited by different groups of people, whose names came to be associated with the area inhabited by them. Thus the ancient *Vaṅga*, *Puṇḍra*, *Radha* and *Gauda* came to be recognized as inhabited by non-Aryan ethnic groups bearing those names. In addition the existence of *Samatāṭa* and *Harikēṭa* is known from later Vedic literature, as areas also inhabited by the non-Aryan people (Chowdhury, 2008).

Most probably these non-Aryan people came in touch with Buddhism during Buddha's lifetime. Buddha is said to have delivered his first sermon at Saranath and then moved to different places including *Majjhimadesha* or *Madhyadesha*. According to *Diyyavadana*, the eastern boundary of the *Majjhimadesha* is said to have extended as far as *Puṇḍravardhana* (Chakma, 2008). *Hsüan-Tsang*<sup>26</sup> notes that *Aśoka*, the great Maurya king, had erected *stūpa* at various places in Bengal and Orissa to commemorate these visits.

Positive evidence of the advance of Buddhism in Bengal found in Madhya Pradesh; here are the detailed carvings and inscriptions on the four gateways to the great *Sāñchi Stūpa*. Inscriptions on the first and second gates, which belong to the second century BC, contain the name of a few Bengalis in the list of supporters. Another epigraph from Nāgār-junakoṇḍā refers that the peoples of Bengal were converted to Buddhism by Ceylonese monks (Majumdar, 1983: 11).

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<sup>26</sup> *Hsüan-tsang* was a famous Chinese Buddhist monk, scholar, traveller and translator who visited India during AD 639-645.

The Post-Maurya period epigraphic material, especially the discovery of a Maurya inscription in Brahmi characters at *Mahāsthān* bearing the name ‘*Pudanagala*’ (*Puṇḍranagar*), as well as the recovery of Maurya coins and other artefacts bear testimony that Buddhism had established a powerful footing in Bengal during *Aśoka*’s reign. Chinese traveller *I-Ching*<sup>27</sup> is said to have noticed *Aśoka*’s *stūpas* in *Tāmraliptī*, *Karṇasuvarṇa*, *Puṇḍravardhana* and *Samatāṭa*. These Chinese sources give a clear view regarding Asoka’s patronization towards Buddhism in Bengal.

After the fall of the Maurya Empire, with the advent of the Sunga, Buddhism lost its royal patronage. The once thriving religion declined because of the hostile attitude of the Sunga kings towards Buddhism and the *Saṅgha*. However, a terracotta tablet found at *Tāmraliptī* refers to the existence of Buddhism in Bengal during the Sunga period (Chakma, 2011: 38). From Buddha to *Aśoka*, Buddhism became so deeply rooted at the heart of the non-Aryan people that probably the hostile attitude of Sunga kings could not wipe it out from Bengal. Some scholars have also opined that the orthodox Sunga kings were not as intolerant towards Buddhism as many scholars think. This slower movement received a further impetus from the *Kuṣāṇa* in the first century AD when *Kaniska* raised Buddhism to the status of a state religion (Hastings, 2003: 38). Discovery of images of Buddha, coins and inscriptions clearly throw light on the flourishing condition of Buddhism in Bengal during his reign. He is said to have erected *stūpas* and *chaityas*, built *vihāras* and sent missions abroad, like *Aśoka*.

From the Gupta period onwards we get written records in the form of epigraphs and literature which contain information regarding the religion of Bengal. Though Gupta emperors were devout adherents of Brahmanism through ‘*Paramabhagavata*’, which they patronized and revived, they had

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<sup>27</sup> *I-Ching* was a Chinese Buddhist monk, the written records of his travels contributed to the knowledge of the ancient India. He visited India during AD 673-687

a tolerant outlook which allowed Buddhism to flourish. The thriving state of Buddhism are present in different sources including *Fa-Hien's*<sup>28</sup> account (Sen, 2006: 27). At the same time the rise of two powerful cults of Saivism and Vaishnavism brought Buddhism closer to Hinduism, and boost Buddhism.

Gupta patronization towards Buddhism can be identified from *Mahārāja Śrīgupta*, the first ruler of the Gupta dynasty, who built a Buddhist shrine and offered it to Buddhist monks from China along with a gift of twenty-four villages, according to Chinese sources. Though the temple cannot be identified yet, many scholars believe the rise of the Guptas from Bengal, according to this opinion as well as from the calculations of Mookerji<sup>29</sup> (Mookerji, 2007), there is a great chance of that temple was built with in Bengal territory.

Another prominent Gupta king *Śamudragupta*, despite being a devout worshipper of Vishnu, proved to be a great patron of Buddhism. His teacher and guide, the celebrated Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu, was appointed as minister, and with the permission of the Ceylonese King Meghavanna, a monastery was built at Bodh-Gaya in his reign. It is likely that on the eve of Gupta expansion under *Śamudragupta* Bengal remained divided into independent states. By about the middle of the fourth century AD most independent states came under *Śamudragupta's* rule, except *Samatāṣa*. His well-structured local administration gave representatives of the local people important part to play in matters of their own development, as well as for Buddhism within a tolerant atmosphere. *Chandragupta* II, who alike his father *Śamudragupta*, was a devout Vaishnava, also gave full freedom to the practice of other faiths in his empire.

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<sup>28</sup> *Fa-Hien* was a Chinese Buddhist monk who travelled to India, Sri Lanka and Nepal between AD 399 and 412 to acquire Buddhist scriptures.

<sup>29</sup> Calculation of Mookerji describes on next section Traces of Gupta and post Gupta Buddhist Architecture

*Chandragupta II Vikramāditya* was also Vaishnava and took the title of *Paramabhagavata* (sincerest devotee of Vishnu). During his reign a prominent minister of Chandragupta gave an allotment of land and a sum of money to the community of Buddhist monks called *Arya-Saṅgha* belongs to the great *vihāra* at *Kakanadabota (Sāñchi)* shows his tolerance towards Buddhism. One of the Udaygiri caves bears an inscription of another minister who was a devotee Shiva (Mookerji, 2007).

*Kumāragupta Mahēndrāditya* founded the great *vihāra* of *Nālandā* which in course of time turned into a university and became the greatest centre of Buddhist learning in Asia. Both *Hsüan-tsang* and the Korean traveller *Prajñavarman* confirms the story of its origin (Ramaswami, 1971: 151). Though it was situated out of Bengal territory, from an early date the Buddhists of Bengal were closely linked with this great institution. *Acharya Dharmapāla* had been the high priest of this *mahāvihāra*, who was succeeded by his disciple *Acharya Shīlabhadra*, a scion of a Brahman king of *Samatāṭa*. Not only scholars from Bengal but also its kings contributed to the development of the great institutions.

Though the foundation of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* was laid at the time of *Kumāragupta I*, several kings of the Gupta dynasty built *vihāras* of their own flanking the original structure and made it the largest *Mahāvihāra*. *Hsüan-tsang* mentioned four of them - *Budhagupta*, *Tathāgatagupta*, *Bālāditya* and *Vajra*. According to Heras, *Budhagupta* is *Skandagupta*, *Tathāgatagupta* is *Puragupta*, *Bālāditya* is *Narasimhagupta* and *Vajra* is *Kumāragupta II* (Heras, 1928: 1-2).

*Skandagupta* continued the policy of his father *Kumāragupta I* and patronage towards *Nālandā* as well as Buddhism was continued. He built another *saṅghārāma* to the south of the previous one to enlarge the university. *Puragupta* also practiced the same rules of his ancestors and built another *saṅghārāma* east of the previous one. Probably his favour for *Nālandā* was even greater than his deceased brother.

*Narasimhagupta* built another *saṅghārāma* on the northeast side of the one built by his father. *Hsüan-tsang* resembles it with the great *vihāra* built under the Bodhi tree (Heras, 1928). Though kings of

Gupta dynasties professed Brahmanical faith, *Narasimbhagupta* is said to have received training in his youth under the great *Mahāyāna* philosopher *Vāsubandhu* (Dutt, 2008). When king Mihirakula from Malwa declared his purpose to destroy the entire Buddhist priests through the five Indies and to overthrow the law of Buddha, *Narasimbhagupta* strictly guarded the frontiers of his kingdom and refused to pay tribute which leads to a war. Later the Huna king entered the kingdom of *Magadha* and pursued *Narasimbhagupta* till the Bay of Bengal (Beal, 1844). In the course of this campaign Mihirakula undoubtedly marched on *Pāṭaliputra* and continued till the Bay of Bengal. He destroyed all Buddhist buildings that he found in his way and killed all its priests. But Mihirakula was finally defeated by the Gupta army and *Narasimbhagupta* did restore the whole university after the destruction of the Huna King. After restoration was done and the construction of his *vihāra* was finished, *Narasimbhagupta* commemorated the event with a great assembly where 10,000 priests flocked to *Nālandā* from every corner of India and even two monks came from far-off China. At his later age, *Narasimbhagupta* resigned the crown in favour of his son, retiring to the *saṅgha* (Heras, 1928: 11).

*Kumāragupta* II, son of *Narasimbhagupta*, again built a *saṅghārāma* on the west side of the previous one (Beal, 1844). Though there are controversies about his religious orientation, most probably he also follows his father religion. *Guṇaigarh* copper plate records a gift of land by *Mahārāja Vāinyagupta* in favor of the Buddhist *saṅgha* of the *Mahāyāna* sect.

In the post-Gupta period, According to *Hsüan-tsang*'s account *Śaśaṅka* was hostile to Buddhism. He ordered the extermination of the Buddhist monks in and around Kushinagara; cut down the holy Bodhi tree of Gaya and threw into the Ganges a sacred stone bearing the footprints of the Buddha. He is also said to have removed an image of Buddha from a shrine close to the Bodhi tree and replaced it with an image of Shiva (Goyala, 2003: 317). In sharp contrast to *Śaśaṅka*'s alleged persecution of Buddhism, stands the flourishing condition of the Buddhist University at *Nālandā* during this period, the existence of a number of *vihāras* in *Śaśaṅka*'s kingdom including

the *Raktamṛṭtikā- Mahāvihāra* near *Karṇasuvarṇa*, the capital city of *Śaśāṅka*, which gives some sign of his tolerant attitude towards Buddhism.

The reign of Emperor *Harshavarḍhana* was one of resurgence and renewed progress and development of Buddhism. Despite being a worshipper of Shiva and Surya, *Harsha* had great leanings towards Buddhism from his elder brother, Rajyavardhana, and sister Rajyashri, both of whom were devout Buddhists. Gradually he emerged as a great patron of Buddhism, at first becoming a devotee of the *Hīnayāna* sect and in later life, an ardent follower of *Mahāyāna*. As a devout Buddhist he gave Buddhism a new impetus. His anti-Brahmanical attitude despaired the followers of the Brahmanical religion who began to migrate to eastern India in large numbers. *Hsüan-Tsang* mentioned of a large influx of learned Brahmanas (Brahmins) into Kamarupa, where they were granted lands by *Bhaṣkaravarman* for their settlement. The Kulaji texts also noted the influx of Kanauji Brahmins into Bengal, possibly at the invitation of *Śaśāṅka* (Bhattacharyya, 2008)

Some of *Harsha*'s notable contributions towards Buddhism include erecting *stūpas* on the banks of the Ganges, building *vihāras* at places sacred to Buddhism, and forbidding the slaying of animals. Another of his important contributions to Buddhism was his regular convening of the convocation. *Harsha* used to summon Buddhist monks once a year for religious discussions. *Harsha* was specially attached to *Nālandā* and extended help liberally. *Harshavarḍhana* is believed to have established his supremacy over *Gauda* (northwestern Bengal) after defeating *Śaśāṅka* or after *Śaśāṅka*'s death. But there is no evidence that *Harshavarḍhana* ever ruled *Baṅga* or *Samatāṭa*, further to the east and south (Chakma, 2011: 40). Chinese pilgrim *Hsüan-Tsang* also enjoyed the patronage of *Harsha* during his visit in India.

The Kailan copper plate supplies a variety of interesting information regarding Rata dynasty of ancient *Samatāṭa*. *Śrīdharaṇarāṭa*, the second ruler of the dynasty, issued land for charitable purposes to Buddhist organizations as well as Brahmins (Rashid, 2008). The inscription also mentions the ruling king *Śrīdharaṇarāṭa* was *Parama-Vaisnava*. But his contribution towards Buddhist

organization proves not only his religious tolerance, but also his devotion towards Buddhist development (Khan, 2004: 13).

After *Harshavarḍhaṇa*, the Khadga dynasty is said to be the first Buddhist dynasty to rule an independent Bengal between the seventh and eighth centuries AD. Chinese monk *Sheng-chi*, who visited *Samatāṭa* in the latter half of the seventh century, mentions *Rājābhaṭṭa* as its king and describes him as an ardent worshipper of the three gems (Triratna i.e., the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *saṅgha*) (Islam, 2008). He found *vihāras* with monks in *Samatāṭa* during his pilgrimage.. Further he stated, the king gave to the monks and nuns offerings for their maintenance. Every morning on behalf of the king an officer was sent to the *vihāra* to ask after the welfare of the resident monks including *Sheng-che*.

The copper plate of *Balabhaṭṭa*, another son of *Devakhadga*, describes land grant made for the maintenance and renovation of *vihāras* and *stūpas*. Two Ashrafpur copperplate inscriptions also describes land donation of both *Devakhadga* and his son *Rājābhaṭṭa* towards Buddhist development. These propose that during the reign of the Khadga kings, Buddhism continued to flourish in Bengal in the seventh century AD.

In contrast, the first Ashrafpur copper-plate furnishes a little more information about the religious leaning of the dynasty. It refers to the inscription of the name *Śrīmat Devakhadga* below the bull facing the left and not the *dharmachakra* (Wheel of Law). This may indicate *Devakhadga's* Shaiva leaning which appears to have continued through his son *Balabhaṭṭa* who also described himself as *paramahesvara Rājāpuṭra* in his copper-plate.

Devakhadga's queen Prabhavati also caused the goddess Sharvani to be covered with gold leaves out of reverence for the goddess (*mahadevibhaktya hemaliptam-akarayat*) at the village of Deulbadi in Comilla. The goddess Sharvani had eight arms which held the thunderbolt, the bell, the bow and the shield, on the left, and the conchshell, the goad, the sword, and the wheel, on the right. She

stood on a lotus-seat on the back of a conch-shaped lion and belonged to the Brahmanical pantheon. Nowhere in the Deulbadi image inscription, however, has it been mentioned that the goddess Sharvani was built and installed at Deulbadi. Indeed, going by the inscription, it has been assumed that the image of the goddess was already in existence at Deulbadi when the queen covered it with gold leaves. According to Ray, the Shaiva leanings of Devakhadga, his queen Prabhavati, and their son *Balabhaṭṭa* were highlighted to act as an instrument for stabilizing Khadga royal power in the newly conquered area of *Samatāṭa* (Ray, 2008).

*Balabhaṭṭa's* title *paramaśeṣvara* (an epithet of Śiva) refers to him as a devout worshiper of Śiva. However, the Deulbadi image inscription shows his liberal attitude towards other religions, especially towards Buddhism, which can be identified from land gifts towards Buddhist *vihāras*.



## 2.4 Traces of Gupta and post Gupta Buddhist architecture

As indicated earlier, most probably Bengal gets in touch with Buddhism during Buddha's life<sup>30</sup>. If that had indeed happened then there would be possibilities of existence of the *saṅgha* as well as the *vihāra* from the ancient period. So far, however, no Buddhist architectural remains have been identified dating to the ancient period, and only epigraphic material suggests the early existence of Buddhism in Bengal. *Hsüan-Tsang*<sup>31</sup> notes that *Aśoka* (c. 269-232 BC), the great *Maurya* king, had erected *stūpa* at various places in Bengal and Orissa to commemorate Buddha's visits (Beal, 1844: 194-204). These notes provide traces of Buddhist architecture during the time of great *Aśoka*, even though none of these have been identified yet in Bengal.

Reconstruction and addition at remarkable sites is a common feature in the history of Bengal. Excavated architectural remains show as many as ten consecutive construction phases and in many cases earlier phases are hard to distinguish from the later phases. That complicates the history of early Buddhist architecture in Bengal. At this point it is important to know if there was any Buddhist architectural development during the Guptas in Bengal.

Reference of the Gupta kings' patronization towards any *vihāra* in Bengal is limited, Chinese sources give the first trace of a *vihāra* built by any Gupta king. *Fa-Hien*<sup>32</sup> (399-414 AD) informs us that *Mahārājā* Gupta or *Śrīgupta*<sup>33</sup> (240-280 AD) built a Buddhist shrine near *Mṛigaśikhāvana* and offered it to Chinese monks along with a gift of twenty-four villages. *I-Ching*<sup>34</sup> further reports that

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<sup>30</sup> Discussed before on Buddhism in Bengal during Gupta and later period

<sup>31</sup> *Hsüan-tsang* was a famous Chinese Buddhist monk, scholar, traveler and translator who visited India during AD 639-645.

<sup>32</sup> *Fa-Hien* (c. 337 - 422 AD) was a Chinese monk and traveller who visited India around 399-414 AD.

<sup>33</sup> *Śrīgupta* was the first ruler of the Gupta dynasty.

<sup>34</sup> *I-Ching* was a Chinese Buddhist monk, the written records of his travels contributed to the knowledge of the ancient India. He visited India during AD 673-687

the aforementioned shrine was about 50 stages east of *Nālandā* down the Ganges. According to Mookerji (Mookerji, 2007: 11) counting *I-Ching's* stage as 5 or 6 miles the shrine would belong at a distance of 250 to 300 miles from *Nālandā*, probably in Bengal. This temple is believed to have remained a sacred place till the seventh century AD.

*Guṇaigarḥ* copper plate<sup>35</sup> records a gift of land by *Mahārāja Vāinya* Gupta (ruled till c. 515 AD) in favour of the Buddhist *Avaiarttika Saṅgha* of the *Mahāyāna* sect (Mookerji, 2007: 123), which is another direct contribution by any Gupta king towards *vihāra* in Bengal. However there are other references those show tolerance of the Gupta kings towards Buddhist *vihāras*.

The *Pahārpur* copper plate<sup>36</sup> records a land grant for the *Vatogubāli vihāra*. The record informs a purchase and grant of a piece of land for the maintenance of a resting place at the *vihāra* by a *Brahman* couple which was situated at *Vatogubāli*. Probably the *vihāra* was a locally reputed establishment of *Puṇdravardhana* (Dasgupta, 2005). Gupta tolerance towards Buddhism and direct patronization towards Buddhist *vihāra* was identified at *Nālandā*<sup>37</sup> that suggest this attitude continued during their reign in Bengal. As a result, numerous *vihāras* and *stūpas* were extant during their reign in Bengal.

Old Buddhist centers like *Kapilāvāstu* and *Saraṣvati* were in a neglected and ruinous state while *Pāṭaliputra*, *Mathurā*, *Bodhgaya*, *Sarnath* and *Nālandā* were flourishing during *Fa-Hien's* (c. 337 – 422 AD) visit around 399-414 AD (Chakma, 2008). Although, Bengal was not in a flourishing state like *Nālandā* during that period to be counted as a major centre of Buddhism, but the existence of *stūpas* and *vihāras* observed by *Fa-Hien* when he travelled eastward from *Pāṭaliputra* along the course

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<sup>35</sup> The *Guṇaigarḥ* copper plate found in Comilla, Bangladesh and dated as Gupta Era 188 (AD 507).

<sup>36</sup> The *Pahārpur* copper plate inscription was found in *Pahārpur vihāra*, Dated as Gupta Era 159 (AD 479),

<sup>37</sup> Gupta contribution toward building of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* was discussed on Buddhism in Bengal during Gupta and later period, page no. 25

of the Ganges nevertheless suggests significant activity . In *Tāmrāipti*, where he spent two years studying and copying manuscripts, he visited twenty-two *viḥāras* (Legge, 1886: 100) and found there monks who lived in accordance with the Buddhist *vinaya* (Ramachandran, 1951: 226). *Arya-Manjuśrī-Mulākālpa* records *Narasimbāgupta Bālāditya* (495- 526 AD) decorated his kingdom with *chaityas* up to the Bay of Bengal as well as he built *viḥāras* all over his empire (Jayaswal, 1934: 75).

Beside these, the *Guṇaigaṛḥ* copper plate informs us that *Acharya* Shantideva, founder of the *Avaiivarttika Saṅgha*, was housed in a *viḥāra* called *Asbaram viḥāra* of *Samataṭa*, which was dedicated to *Avalokiteśvara*. The inscription further refers to a *viḥāra* known as *Rājā viḥāra* (Chakma, 2008).

Explored Buddhist sculptural evidences from Bengal from the Gupta period are not significant. The several thousand specimens known from different parts of Bengal, from the earliest to the Gupta period, are mostly made of terracotta. The earliest terracotta art does not represent any religion; nor the Hindu, the Buddhist or the Jain. During the Gupta period, emerging Buddhist iconography helped in shaping both Hindu and Buddhist images of Bengal. The number of stone specimen increases from the Gupta period but the terracotta sculptures also continue (Haque, 2007: 75-77).

Similarly, finds of the Gupta period stone sculptures in Bangladesh are not numerous. The sandstone image of Buddha from Biharail is one of the earliest among the stone sculptures of the Gupta period<sup>38</sup> that is a standing image remarkable for its subtle modelling of the body with the diaphanous robe (Haque, 2007: 77). The refined delicacy in the sculptural treatment suggests it as a mature Gupta sculpture. Another gold-plated bronze image of Bodhisattva from Balai Dhap<sup>39</sup>,

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<sup>38</sup> The sandstone image of Buddha from Biharail, Rajshahi district, is now preserved in Varendra Research museum, Rajshahi.

<sup>39</sup> The bronze image of Bodhisattva from Balai Dhap, near *Mahāsthāngaṛḥ* is now in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.

which is also remarkable, has been dated variously by the scholars from late sixth to early eighth century AD. Still these stone sculptures and the numerous specimens suggest the presence of the Buddhist *vihāra* during the Gupta period.

It is a common belief amongst many architectural historians that the post-Gupta period till the rise of the *Pāla* was a dark phase in the history of Bengal and was therefore termed as the period of *Maṭṣaṇṇaya*. However, the earlier analysis of the political history of later Gupta and post-Gupta Bengal<sup>40</sup> indicate the rise of numerous small states between the fifth and seventh centuries AD; many of these appeared in areas which had previously never experienced the presence of any regular state machinery. The collection and consumption of surplus was no longer centralized but became more localized (Darian, 1977: 229). Towns in this period were mainly pilgrimage centres, military encampments and administrative centres. The distinction between the town and the countryside became increasingly blurred. Numerous local centres of art emerged as religious donation also increased with the rise of the proliferation of local rulers and feudatories (Desap, 1990: 7). And above all, during this period local rulers of Bengal were mainly Buddhist, as a result, numerous Buddhist *vihāra* can be observed.

*Hsüan-tsang* (c. 602- 664 AD) visited all major places associated with Buddhism in India around 630-645 AD. At *Puṇḍravardhana* found twenty Buddhist monasteries with more than 3,000 monks. He described a magnificent *vihāra* named *Po-chi-po* that was located in the vicinity of the capital of *Puṇḍravardhana*. That *vihāra* had had spacious halls and storied chambers which were occupied by over 700 monks. He describes its court as light and roomy and with very lofty towers and pavilions. He found a *stūpa* built by Aśoka adjacent to this *vihāra*. Further, he mentioned another *vihāra* with an image of *Kwan-tsŭ'-'tsai* (*Avalokitesvara*), which attracted visitors from far and near, not far from this *Po-chi-po* (Beal, 1844: 195).

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<sup>40</sup> Discussed before in the Chronology of later Gupta and post-Guptas in Bengal on page 38

In *Samataṭa* *Hsüan-tsang* found more than thirty Buddhist monasteries with about 2,000 priests of Sthavira School. He describes existence of a *stūpa* built by King *Aśoka* and a *vihāra* which contained an image of Buddha of eight feet height within the vicinity of its capital (Beal, 1844: 199-200). *Hsüan-tsang* also mentioned ten Buddhist monasteries with about 1,000 monks and more than ten Buddhist monasteries with about 2,000 monks at *Tāmraliptī* and *Karṇasuvarṇa*, respectively. He described another large *vihāra* like *Po-chi-po* in the vicinity of the capital of *Karṇasuvarṇa* named *Lo-to-wei-chi* (*Raktaviti*). There was another *stūpa* built by king *Aśoka*, which was not far from it and another *vihāra* was adjacent to that *Aśoka stūpa*.

*I-Ching* remained in *Tāmraliptī* for five months to learn Sanskrit and the science of word during his visit around 673 to 693 AD. He notes that as many as fifty-six Buddhist priests from China visited India and its neighboring areas in the latter half of the seventh century AD. While *I-Ching* was at *Tāmraliptī* he met *Ta-cheng-teng*<sup>41</sup> in a *vihāra* called *Po-lo-ho*. (Ramachandran, 1951: 227). Another monk *Sheng-chi*, who visited *Samataṭa*, mentions there were 30 monasteries with more than 4,000 monks in *Samataṭa* during his pilgrim's visit (Chakma, 2008).

These Chinese sources prove Buddhism was flourishing in Bengal during the post-Gupta period, further explored inscriptions also back this idea. The Kailan copper plate inscription<sup>42</sup> of *Śrīdhārāṇarāṭa* supplies information regarding land donation towards Buddhist organization in *Guptinatana* (in or near *Maināmatī*) and *Patalyika visayas* of *Samataṭa*. That is the only sign which shows any *Rāṭa* king's participation towards Buddhist *vihāra*. However, it is interesting to note that it mentioned the grant of land also to Brahmans, which is indicative of the religious condition of Bengal in the seventh century, the ordinary donor here showing absolute religious tolerance (Sukla, 1980: 231).

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<sup>41</sup> *Ta-cheng-teng*, distinguished Chinese scholar, lived at *Tāmraliptī* for twelve years to study Sanskrit Buddhist texts

<sup>42</sup> The Kailan copper plate inscription of *Śrīdhārāṇarāṭa*

*Sālban vibhāra* copper plate of *Balabbhatta*, son of *Devakhadga*, describes him as having granted land in the area of *Dhanalaksmipataka* (unidentified) for maintenance and renovation of *vibhāras* and *stūpas*. The plate refers to *mahabbogashrama*, probably meaning the *asrama* where grand religious festivals were held. The *vibhāras* were apparently eight in number and in them the *Parimitamatam* and *Danachandrika* were discussed (Islam, 2008).

The *vibhāra* where Chinese monk *Sheng-Che*<sup>43</sup> lived was *Rājā vibhāra* of *Samataṭa*. The king is said to have given to the monks and nuns, including *Sheng-che*, offerings for their maintenance. This *Rājā vibhāra* may be suggested to have been the same as mentioned in the *Gunaigarh* Copper plate of *Vāinyagupta* (Ray, 2008). Ashrafpur copper plates of *Devakhadga* throws light on more *vibhāras*. According to both land grants *Devakhadga* and his son *Rājābbhatta* together donated land to *Sanghamitra* in favour of four *vibhāras* and *vibhārikās*. Probably they did not get the *vibhāras* constructed; rather bought the existing establishments within a single campus to make it into a sacred landscape (Islam, 2008).

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<sup>43</sup> The Chinese monk *Sheng-Che* visit *Samataṭa* during the reign of *Rājābbhatta*, son of *Devakhadga*.

Religion has a direct influence on architecture (Reischauer, 2004: 299), and any changes in religious thought is likely to have a more immediate impact on religious architecture. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the two important elements that underpin Buddhist architecture; the philosophical position in Buddhist thought and the evolution of Buddhist *saṅgha* architecture. This discussion will provide an outline understanding of the parallel development of thoughts and monastic architecture. However, this short chapter gives no account of the interpretation of Buddhist thoughts towards architecture, which is a vast subject that needs further study.

The discussion, in investigating the development of Buddhist thought and their philosophical standpoints will include a brief description of each Buddhist schools of thought. The attention is focused upon the *bhakti* movement and its influence on three main paths of Buddhism; *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna*. The second part of this chapter will describe the evolutionary pattern of the Buddhist *saṅgha*: how the *vihāra* developed as a permanent dwelling for the group of *bhikkhus* from the temporary early shelter from the elements for a single *bhikkhu*.

### 3.1 Buddhist schools of thoughts and their development

#### 3.1.1 Rise of Buddhist schools and their philosophical stands

In early Buddhism, i.e, Buddhism during the lifetime of the Buddha, rules were frequently amended to allow certain kinds of behaviour which were forbidden in a previous version. At the early stage attending public festivals was prohibited for the *bhikkhus* as well as activities such as playing and dancing. They were also not allowed to show off their supernatural abilities and to use or receive money in order to lead a simple life.

In the beginning as it was a small community the Buddha, who was the leader and main teacher, was the only one who decided on the rules that were to be followed. But when the Buddha allowed monasteries to be established as donations, many monasteries were established and different views on monastic life evolved, even though Buddha forbade the monastic community to make their own rules and gave instructions for the monks to follow his teachings after his death. Furthermore, he gave very limited powers to the *saṅgha* and asked not to follow the 'lesser and minor' rules. As a result, monastic development was united during and immediately after Buddha's life.

According to the scriptures, soon after the passing of the Buddha, the first Buddhist council (543–542 BCE) was held. Buddha's teachings were originally transmitted orally. The primary purpose of this assembly was to collectively recite the teachings to ensure that no errors occurred in oral transmission, and to avoid chances of making mistakes. Most scholars believe that after the Second Council (c. fourth century BC) the *saṅgha* initially began to split into separate groups due to differences in *vinaya*<sup>1</sup> as well as other doctrinal and geographical separation; as a result the early Buddhist schools emerged.

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<sup>1</sup> Disciplinary Code of practice prescribes by the Buddhist texts.



The original *saṅgha* split into the first early schools commonly believed to be the *Sthaviravāda* and the *Mahāsāṃghika*. According to the *Mahāvamsa*, a later source, after the second council a group of *bhikkhus*, mainly juniors, held an assembly of their own, which had ten thousand participants calling it a *Mahasangiti* (Great Convocation) (San, 2006: 144). The *Mahāsāṃghika* School derived its name from that great convocation. On the other hand those who rejected their theories named themselves *Sthaviravāda* to differentiate from the *Mahāsāṃghika*.

Later, the *Sthaviravāda* School further split into two divisions these are the *Sarvāstivāda* and the *Vibhajjavāda* schools. The resultant *Vibhajjavāda* School gave rise to a number of branches such as the *Dharmaguptaka*, *Mahīśāsaka*, *Kāśyapīya* and the *Mahāvihāravāsins* schools. These early schools split into further divisions and ended up numbering, traditionally, about 18 or 20 schools.

The Third Buddhist Council (250 BCE) was convened under the patronage of Emperor Asoka in the seventeenth year of his reign at *Pāṭaliputra*. *Thera* Moggaliputta Tissa headed the proceedings and chose one thousand monks from the sixty thousand participants for the traditional recitation of the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya*. As *Moggaliputta* was from the *Vibhajjavāda* School, who believed that the doctrine taught by the Buddha was the Doctrine of Analysis (*Vibhajjavāda*), *bhikkhus* from a number of monasteries were questioned about the teachings of Buddha and those who held a different view were exposed and expelled from the *saṅgha* immediately. That was possible because of the Emperor's direct involvement and as a result, again, the *saṅgha* become officially unified.

The unified *saṅgha*, the *Theravāda* School, was ultimately derived from the *Vibhajjavāda*, who saw themselves as the continuation of orthodox *Sthaviras* and continued to refer to their school as the *Theras* (The Elders). *Thera* and *Sthavira* evolved from Pāli and Sanskrit forms of the same word meaning 'elder' and their doctrines were probably similar but were not completely identical.

*Theravādans* believed that every individual is personally responsible for his own self-awakening which can only be achieved through direct experience and personal realization. An individual would need to follow and practice the noble Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha to discover the reality. They also believed that Buddhas, gods or deities are incapable of giving a human being the awakening or liberation from the state of repeated cycle of birth, illness, aging and death. For *Theravādans*, Buddha is only a teacher of the noble Eightfold Path. *Theravāda* School claimed their doctrinal continuity with the early *Sthaviravāda*.

The origins of *Mahāyāna* doctrines may be discerned in the teachings of some of these early schools, in particular in the *Mahāsāṅghika* and the *Sarvāstivāda*, but they come to the forefront as the prominent *Mahāyāna* schools between the first century BCE and the first century CE, coinciding with the writing of the new *Mahāyāna* sutras. *Mahāyāna* is a Sanskrit and Pāli term literally meaning "Great Vehicle" and they refer to the older pre-existing *Theravāda* school as *Hīnayāna*, "the low vehicle", where *-yāna* (Sanskrit and Pāli: "vehicle") refers to a mode or method of spiritual practice, which have a similarity with Vedic *-yāna* (spiritual journey).

There were strong tendencies for Buddhists to worship Buddha as a god, which probably began as early as Buddha's lifetime. As Buddha never allowed any sort of worship, it was prohibited at that time. But *Mahayana* School accepts the worship of *bodhisattvas* as they believe Buddhas or deities are capable of giving a human being the expected awakening. In *Mahāyāna* practice, worship of *bodhisattvas* comes as a *-yāna* (vehicle) to the journey of awakening. Due to the veneration of Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas*, *Mahāyāna* was often interpreted as a devotional (*bhakti*) form of Buddhism.

According to a group of Buddhist scholars *Mahāyāna* have two *-yānas* (vehicles) or methods for attaining awakening: the method of the perfections (*Paramitayāna*) and the method of *mantrā* (*Mantrayāna*). As mentioned by the literature, the *mantrā* is an easy path for those of inferior

abilities. Later the *Vajrayāna* rise from the *Mantrayāna*, subset of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, and they develop as one of the three main routes to enlightenment.

### 3.1.2 Influence of *Bhakti* on *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhism

From previous discussions it can be summarised that the different schools developed because of first, their attitude towards the *Dhamma* and secondly, the *Bhakti* movement (tendencies for worship/ notion of devotion) in the *Dhamma*. Here we will try to explore the *Bhakti* movement and its influence on three main routes of Buddhism, *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna*. In order to identify the influence of *Bhakti* on Buddha *Dhamma*, both *Bhakti* and *Dhamma* need to be understood first.

As *Dhamma* carried several special meanings within different schools of Buddhism, we will confine ourselves to “the basic teaching of the Buddha” as *Dhamma* to understand the influence of *Bhakti* in Buddhism. According to Elizabeth the first idea implied by Buddha was the intellectual enlightenment, which must be acquired by one through his own inner consciousness, unaided by external influence. Buddha advocated self-conquest, self-concentration and separation from the world for the attainment of true knowledge, and yet encouraged association by establishing brotherhood with other *bhikkhus* (Elizabeth, 2009: 18-30).

The Sanskrit noun *bhakti* is derived from the verb root *bhaj*, whose meanings include "to share in", "to belong to", and "to worship". *Bhakti* has the basic sense of involvement, participation and sharing. In religious practice we find different forms of *Bhakti* such as reverence towards a *guru*, worship of gods, man's love of the gods and god's love of man. R. R. Singh in his *Bhakti* and philosophy gives an account that *Bhakti* was present in religious circles when Buddha appeared on the Indian religious scene (Singh, 2006). He suggests that *Bhakti* was fully in vogue when historical Buddha appeared on the sub-continent of India and it continued to pervade the *Dhamma* in its early doctrinal period as well as in its later developments.

At the early stage *Guru-Bhakti* (*guru* = teacher) appears in the religious ethos. Although *Theravādans* believed that Buddhas, gods or deities are incapable of giving a human being the awakening and Buddha was only a teacher of the noble Eightfold Path, *Samyutta Nikāyam*, the third of the five *nikāyas* of *Theravāda* Buddhism, addressed Buddha as *Bhagavān* (God) or the blessed one, a title reserved for the incarnations of God. According to Hirakawa, *Samyutta Nikāyam* was collected during the First Council and it was developed and expanded over the next century (Hirakawa, 1993). Another group of *suttapiṭaka* refers to the worship of Buddha and the ritual worship of the *Stūpa* and *Dhātu* (Holy relics) (Dutt, 2008). Thus within a century after Buddha's incarnation, *Bhakti* penetrates the ethos of Buddhist *Dhamma* and lasted until the fourteen century AD (Singh, 2006), which Buddhism in its primitive form knew nothing of. Later in the Pali commentaries, written in the fifth century AD, refers to a discussion accepting the *stūpa* and Buddha image within relics.

In the centuries immediately following the adaptation of the Buddha-image the *Mahāyāna* path appeared, where in the different features of the doctrine it can be seen that a candidate for Buddha-hood, i.e., a *Mahāyāna bhikkhu*, cannot succeed without the help of the Buddha and this help could only be secured through *Bhakti*. The early Buddhist showed their respect to the Buddha, the relics or the holy places; but the element of *Bhakti* (worship) was nearly non-existent. The objects of worship in what followed were many living gods - many *Bhagavān*; which was quite different from the earlier approach (Hastings, 2003). The Mahāyāna school emphasised on the form and ceremony of image-worship and they admitted in many deities, both male and female, and both principle and attendant. Their rites of worship described in the Canto II, vv, 10 ff., of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva (written in eight century AD) being practically the same with those performed in the *Brāhmaṇical* image-worship. The rituals consisted of bathing the image with scented water, vocal and instrumental music, offering of flowers, food and clothes, swinging censers and burning incenses (Dutt, 2008). This trend, well established as early as the

first century BC, finally developed into the Bhakti cult of *Mahāyāna*, where devotional worship of Buddha and the Bodhisattvas became an integral part (Lele, 1981).

The third major route of Buddhism, *Vajrayāna*, was the particular *Mahāyāna* expression as a pan-Indian religious movement where *Mahāyāna* became the Buddhist form of the *Bhakti* or devotional movement. One key feature of this Buddhism is the emphasis on initiation and the important place of the tantric master (*guru*) as teacher who is the gateway to the powers of the tantric deity or Buddha as well as their secret world (*mandala*). Since there was no god in early Buddhism, *Bhakti* found in *Vajrayāna* does not mean the same thing as in the *Bhakti* cults of Hinduism however there are many similarities. *Vajrayāna Bhakti* is always towards the *Guru* who plays a very special role unlike the early Buddhist doctrine where the Buddha was only a teacher i.e. somebody to point the way. Now the *Guru* is not merely a teacher, he is also the way itself and this second role is more important in *Vajrayāna* (Rana, 1996).

It is not necessary in *Vajrayāna* to have only one *Guru* rather it was preferred to have many *Gurus*. The expression of Bhakti towards *Guru* in the form of worship involves many deities in *Vajrayāna* Buddhism. Some of the Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan sects had many deities, even as many as 300. This *Vajrayāna*, Buddhist expression of what has been called *Tantrism*, an esoteric and often controversial form of religious belief and practice, became influential throughout India from the fifth century AD.

### 3.2 Rise of *vihāra* and its position in Buddhism

Buddhism, a philosophy developed around five hundred years before the Common Era as a practice of good works and opposing the priestly domination of the Brahmins. In its original form Buddhism was solely a system of philosophy of life; however, it soon acquired the character of a religion but still it did not make war with other existing faiths. Advocates of Buddhism claimed a man could consistently be a Brahmin or adhere to any other faith and at the same time a Buddhist, a position that helped it make wonderful progress (Elizabeth, 2009: 10-23).

Buddha began his preaching in the eastern corner of northern India. Soon a group of disciples received ordination by his hand and formed a union of faith under his spiritual guidance. When it grew somewhat in numerical strength - not even a hundred strong - Buddha charged it with the mission to '*go further and wander about for the good of many*', and they became *bhikkhus*, wandering almsmen. These *bhikkhus* were different from an ordinary beggar by the sacramental character of their begging and they called their small group a 'Union of *bhikkhus*' (*Bhikkhu-saṅgha*).

During the rainy season that roughly lasts for a period of three months, the countryside of eastern India got flooded and cross country tracks were washed away. Those wandering almsmen had to reckon with the monsoon conditions and it became customary to suspend wandering and seek shelter for this season.

Except for a small class who preferred to live in the forest, *bhikkhus* naturally made their settlements in localities where alms are available. In most cases shelter had to be built though in some cases the *bhikkhus* found a wealthy lay devotee inclined to donate accommodation to the *bhikkhus* as an act of piety. Initially employing temporary material, these shelters were for monsoon only, but gradually these grew into established centers in permanent material. Thus two kinds of settlements came into existence – (1) the *Āvāsa*, in the country side, built and maintained by the *bhikkhus* themselves, and (2) the *Ārāma*, in or near a town or city, looked after

by the donor. The *bhikkhu*-built *āvāsa* was, after all, a temporary setup, whereas *ārāma*, the word denoting ‘pleasure-ground’, was a superior kind of habitat.

When an *ārāma* was given to the *bhikkhu* by the owner permanently it was called *Saṅghārāma*, meaning an *ārāma* owned by the *Saṅgha*. Although the *ārāma* converted from private property to *saṅgha* property, the donor would not lose interest in it, as it appears that the person would continue to look after the property and keep it in habitable condition. In Buddhist texts several *Saṅghārāmas* are mentioned by names that were once in existence, although only a few of these have been traced by archaeologists, such as *Jivakarama*, *Jetavanarama* and *Ghositarāma*. Some of the foundations of these sites are still traceable, which remained occupied by *bhikkhus* for many centuries.

For these settlements five kinds of dwellings, known as *Pañcha-lena*, are referenced in Buddhist canonical texts, namely *vihāra*, *addayoga*, *pasada*, *hammiya* and *guba*; whereas only the *guba* (cave) and *vihāra* (monastery) are commonly used. The term *lena* originated from Sanskrit word *layana*, meaning personal abode. Probably at the early stage these dwellings were individual ones for *bhikkhus*. Most of the rock cut caves, built during second century BC to ninth century AD, were used for private living, study and meditation, whereas large caves were built later as *chaityas* (space to conduct congregational prayer and worship before a *stūpa* or an image of Buddha) or *maṇḍapas* (halls for congregational worship).

*Vihāra* was the name originally given to the hut for the dwelling of *bhikkhus* within the boundary of an *āvāsa* or an *ārāma* which in general was occupied by a single *bhikkhu* or a small group of *bhikkhus*. The portion allotted to each monk, in case where a group of *bhikkhus* lived in a *vihāra*, was called *parivera*, comprising bed and sitting. Later *vihāra* become a permanent abode for the *saṅghārāma*. Thus in later usage the term *vihāra* came to mean something different, with a broader sense.

*Saṅgha* life developed in a way that no longer permitted the early dispersed mode of living; rather, a collective and congregational life replaced previous mode of existence. As a result, private *lena* was converted as a compact unitary establishment for a group of *bhikkhus* - as a *saṅgha* by itself. Archaeologists who have explored *guha*-construction had leveled them in two main stages; *Bhikkhu-guhas* and *Saṅgha* (Dutt, 2008: 139). First built was a set of residential caves and once they were occupied, a *saṅgha* started; adjacent spaces for collective functions were added gradually. *Chaitiya* and *Maṇḍapas* were two major functions added at a later stage. Thus from a single cave, the cave with supporting functions (cave *vihāra*) developed and further this development continued towards the cave monastery complex.

The *vihāra* developed as a dwelling-house for the group of *bhikkhus* from the early small rainy shelter of a single *bhikkhu*, thus from a private dwelling to a collective and congregational dwelling developed. Archaeological excavations also confirm further development towards *vihāra* with the addition of other functions (*Jagaddāla vihāra*) and also towards the *vihāra* complex (*Nālandā*). During the Gupta and later periods the term *vihāra* in general was used to denote both the *ārāma* and the *bhikkhu saṅgha*.



### 3.3 Buddhist Rituals & Practices in mediaeval Bengal

Buddhism first arose as a movement of the *saṅgha*, a gathering of the community of *bhikkhus* (monks) and *bhikkhunis* (nuns). It was opposed to Brahmanical religious life, which placed the highest importance on the involvement of lay people in religious rituals. The core of this new movement, therefore, consisted primarily of rituals associated with the *saṅgha*. However, it was not long before lay people, both men and women, gathered around the monks as their supporters and followers. Therefore one needs to distinguish the two kinds of Buddhist disciples: the monks and the lay people (Wijayaratna, 1990: 1).

Literary sources, inscriptions, paintings and sculptures of this period provide ample information about the early-Buddhist practice and rituals. Canonical texts describe how many people renounced luxuries of lay life and became monks, highlighting the simplicity of daily life within the *saṅgha*. These texts further refer to the numerous laws and regulations guiding the person desiring to be part of the *saṅgha*. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, one of the three parts of the *Tripitaka*,<sup>2</sup> describes the rules and regulations of monastic life. According to the *Vinaya*, Buddha introduced two types of *śīla* (practice) to build up the moral character of the lay people: the first type, *pañcaśīla*, was for both the people of the *saṅgha* and the layman, which prohibited the killing of animals, theft, adultery, telling lies and taking addictive drugs. The second type, *aṣṭaśīla*, added three further rules; it prohibited taking solid food after noon until dawn the following day, visiting musical programmes and the use of jewellery, cosmetics, and beauty lotions and lastly the use of high and luxurious beds and seats. On the other hand, the rules for the inhabitants of the *saṅgha* are more complex. To be a *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhuni*, to enter the *saṅgha*, one had to sacrifice at least two more things; relinquish domestic life and live in monasteries. Whereas a mature member of the *saṅgha*

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<sup>2</sup> *Tripitaka* is a traditional term used by various Buddhist sects to describe their various canons of scriptures. Tripitaka traditionally contains three "baskets" of teachings: a *Sūtra Piṭaka* (text about Buddhist teachings), a *Vinaya Piṭaka* (Rules and regulation of monastic life) and an *Abhidharma Piṭaka* (Philosophical and psychological discourse and interpretation of Buddhist doctrine).

had many more rules to abide by, they had to follow nevertheless follow the basic rules established in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. According to *Theravāda* tradition it consisted of 227 rules for fully ordained *bhikkhus* and 311 for *bhikkhunis*. Other branches of Indian Buddhism also regarded the *Vinaya* as their guidance.

*Mahāyāna* movement introduced a new dimension to the aim and purpose of spiritual life. It reoriented the philosophical view giving emphasis to *bhakti* as a fundamental in the religion. The *Mahāyāna* way evolved as an elaborate path of ritual worship (*pūjā*). According to their thinking, the *vinaya* had a use and significance different from what the *Theravāda* way had conceived (Dutt, 2008: 176). Although following most of the rules from the *vinaya*, *Mahāyāna saṅgha* exhibited a more relaxed emphasis on the *vinaya*.

*Saṅgha* life required that specific practices regarding clothes and lodging, money and food, solitude and inner progress be observed; this resulted in undertaking training and initiation on one hand and following a set of regulations on the other (Wijayaratna, 1990: 137). In Buddhism, a religion based on canonical scriptures, we can observe a marked difference between earlier and more modern states in its ritual practice; broadly, a threefold distinction of "canonical", "traditional", and "modern" practices can be observed (Bechert, 1973: 85).<sup>3</sup> "Canonical" practice is found in the early Buddhism of the *Tripitaka*. Although there are differences between teachings and conceptions found in the earlier strata and those in later strata of these scriptures, we can describe "canonical" Buddhism as a fairly coherent system of religious and philosophical teachings that include a systematized set of rules and regulations for the behaviour of the members of the *Saṅgha*. "Traditional" Buddhism is the totality of beliefs and practices of Buddhists in the periods following the final codification of the canonical scriptures and before the beginnings of the modern period. "Modern" Buddhism is a common designation of all forms

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<sup>3</sup> Through Bechert proposes three fold distinction for the Hīnayāna Buddhism, in a broad sense that similarly implies to other branches of Buddhism; especially for the Mahāyāna tradition.

of Buddhism that have developed under the impact of the changes which have taken place in the modern period; these include "modernistic" forms of Buddhism as well as "traditionalist" responses to the challenge of outside influences.

Over time, these activities imbibed detailed practices from local custom; however, the basics remained the same since the development of the *vinaya*. With minor differences many traditional *vihāras* followed similar practices, which were practiced by generations and over hundreds of years.<sup>4</sup> A reconstruction of the daily life in a mediaeval Bengali *saṅgha* is provided below.

*Saṅgha* life used to start early in the morning when the stars were still out and the world was asleep. Upon waking in the morning, usually there was first a period of sitting meditation. Sitting meditation was and has remained a fundamental practice in Buddhism, which originated from the practices of the Buddha himself, its importance underscored by the event of his attaining enlightenment while sitting in this meditational posture while observing the morning star. This fundamental Buddhist practice has been transmitted for over 2,500 years to the present day. In the present day practice following waking up at about 3.30 am in the morning the ceremony begins at about 4 am (Roy, 2011). According to the mediaeval system of time measurement in Bengal, this morning ceremony would have been held during the *Pratham Prabhar* (first time division, *prabhar*, starting the day) of the day.<sup>5</sup> Till now, some parts of the Buddhist world practice the *Pratham Prabhar Pūjā* (Gellner, 1991).<sup>6</sup>

The ceremony began with the recitation of one of the longest and most powerful *mantra*. According to Buddhist tradition this *mantra* had many beneficial effects, such as protecting the world from disasters, eradicating negative *karma* of the past, and developing ultimately an

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<sup>4</sup> Continuity of tradition was observed at Rajvana *vihāra* (Roy 2011), Chittagong and New *Sālbān vihāra*, Comilla.

<sup>5</sup> *Prabhar* was mediaeval time measuring unit of Bengal and other parts of India. A day was divided into 8 *prabhar*s. Many scholars believe that *pratham prabhar* starts at 3AM in the morning and it is 3 hours long.

<sup>6</sup> Within Nepalese Newar Buddhism, which is surviving example of Mahāyāna–Vajrayāna tradition, *Pratham Prabhar Pūjā* is still practiced.

unshakable concentration. The ceremony continued with the Heart Sutra, which meditated on the emptiness of all phenomena, it served as a reminder for the practitioner to not get attached to the merits and benefits accrued from participating in the ceremony. The morning ceremony ended with the ritual of bowing to the patriarchs to show gratitude; without their hard work and dedication the teachings would not have been available to the later generations.

Later in the morning, people begin their work for the day. From Buddhist texts, especially from the earlier *Mahāyāna* texts, it can be perceived that the monks were expected not to stray from a simple way of life, and they were expected not to abuse the generosity of their benefactors (Wijayaratna, 1990: 24). To ensure this, there has been a tradition over more than two millennia of undertaking monastic work. Working in the monastery was considered a blessing, as through this the monk was able to create stronger affinities with the *dharma*.

The next major ceremony was the making the meal offering before the lunchtime meal. Food was offered to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and all living beings wishing that they would also partake in what the monks were having. Later the monks had their own meal. In *viḥāras* all food came as offerings from the generosity of others; the monks had to take the food with a sense of gratitude and thankfulness. The food was vegetarian and there were also option of vegan for those who choose it. The reason behind the vegetarian food was showing compassion for animals, a tradition which still prevails in most functioning *viḥāras*.

Discussion and talks on the *dharma* following the meal is another tradition that has prevailed since the ancient times. There is a mutual relationship between lay people and monastics, where the laity provides sustenance and material support (*dāna*<sup>7</sup>, traditionally, bedding, clothing, food, and medicine), and the monastics give teachings to the laity. In contemporary *viḥāras* although taped lectures of master monks are used for the *dharma* talk, but the tradition persists. After the

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<sup>7</sup> *Dāna* is donations to the monastic community (*saṅgha*), which includes almsgiving to individual monks, is one of the most well-known activities of the lay people.

noon meal, there was the Great Compassion Repentance, a ceremony that focused on the Avalokiteśvara<sup>8</sup>.

Evening ceremony was the next time when the *saṅgha* congregated. This ceremony began with the Incense Praise and followed by the recitation of the *sūtras*. This was followed by a *sūtra* lecture, which provided an opportunity to hear the words of the Buddha explained within a traditional setting. At the end of the lecture there was the Dedication of Merit, which was the last ceremony of the day.

It can be observed from the daily life that except for providing the *dāna*, the only opportunity the lay people had to participate in monastic life was during the *dharma* talk. Probably rituals gave the opportunity to monks and lay people to work together. The rituals and ceremonies of Buddhism varied from country to country, and from area to area within a country. Hiuen Tsung, the Chinese monk who visited India in the 7th century AD, recounted that different Buddhist sects were following quite different ritual calendars, and even celebrated events in the Buddha's life, such as his birthday, on dates that were months apart (Hardy, 2008). One reason behind this difference was that many Buddhists believed each day was a good or a sacred day and there was no mention of any bad or inauspicious days or moments in the early Buddhist Holy Scripture. According to this belief religious rites could therefore be performed on any day. Traditionally the monks performed religious rites and rituals on specific days according to local understanding. This local tradition continued and later Buddhism also incorporated a variety of rituals and festivals to aid in the journey to enlightenment based on local understanding.

The well observed Buddhist festivals of Bengal were the *Maghi Purnima*, *Falguni Purnima*, *Asadhi Purnima* and the *Madhu Purnima*; which are commonly believed to have had ancient or early-mediaeval origins. At present it is difficult to identify when these festival were first practiced in Bengal, an issue that would require further investigation. Among these festivals the Buddha

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<sup>8</sup> Avalokiteśvara is one of the more widely revered *bodhisattvas* in mainstream *Mahāyāna* Buddhism

*Purnima* was the main religious festival for the Buddhist community, observed on *Baishakhi Purnima*, the day of the full moon in *Baishakh* (mid-April to mid-May, the first month in Indian calendars). Three important events in the life of Buddha are believed to have occurred on this day: his birth, his gaining enlightenment, and his death (Barua, 2008a).

After the Buddha *Purnima* the next Buddhist festival of importance in Bengal was the *Prabarana Purnima*, also known as Ashvini Purnima. *Prabarana* indicates adopting wholly and forbidding. In the first sense it means dedicating oneself to the ideal of a life of humility; in the sense of forbidding, it means avoiding all acts contrary to the ideals of Buddhism (Barua, 2008c). *Prabarana* is observed on the day of the full moon in the month of Asvin. After *Prabarana*, the monks (*vikṣus*) were required to go to the villages to spread the message of Buddhism. At the end of *Prabarana*, every *vihāra* celebrated the festival of *Kathin Chivar Dāna*. The ceremony was *kathin* (difficult) as the entire process of making *chivar*- twisting yarn, weaving, cutting the cloth, sewing, dyeing, washing and drying, as well as distributing it among the *vikṣus* had to be completed within 24 hours, from one sunrise to the next. There were other similarly onerous rituals performed as part of *Kathin Chivar Dāna* – difficult both for those who made the gift and those who accepted it (Barua, 2008b).

The main aim of this chapter is to analyze the development of design in the early Buddhist architecture of Bengal, which was built during the pre *Pāla* period by Gupta and post Gupta rulers. In chapter two existence of Buddhist architecture in Bengal during the pre *Pāla* period have been discussed. Here their basic character will be discussed and development pattern will be followed. Analyzing architectural plan it was observed that residential spaces of a *vihāra*, that makes the surrounding square shape, has limited alteration except incorporation of wing shrine and its evolution with time. Development of gateway also needs to be discussed.

Buddhist architecture can be classified into several distinct categories as determined by their architectural program, namely the *vihāra*, the rock-cut cave, the *stūpa*<sup>1</sup> and the temple. Generally these types are not strictly isolated constructions; rather they are often found gathered into zones or groups of similar structures within a site (Phuoc, 2010: 28). Many examples can be found which could be classified as hybrid type. In Bengal most mediaeval Buddhist sites belong to this type, where *vihāra* and *stūpa* or temple belongs within a complex. That is why the discussion of Bengal *vihāra* would be incomplete without the analysis of the shrine structure associated with it.

The beginning of this Chapter gives a brief of functional arrangement of *vihāra* including their basic architecture characteristics. Later a typological analysis will show the stand of Bengal *vihāra* in the broad perspective of Indian Buddhist architecture. The last section of the chapter will give an understanding on the architectural style of the medieval Bengal shrine structure.

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<sup>1</sup> A *stūpa* is a mound-like structure containing Buddhist relics, typically the remains of Buddha, used by Buddhists as a place of worship.

## 4.1 Ground plan organization during the Gupta and post Gupta periods

### 4.1.1 Basic composition of a Bengal *vihāra*

In terms of the basic characteristics and organization, Bengal *vihāra* follow the established structure and arrangements of a *vihāra* complex, similar to those built at *Nālandā* or other Indian traditions. Certain additions and alterations occur because of local influences and stylistic development. The overall planning of the *vihāra* complex remains the same in the basic composition, specially the residential arrangement remain unchanged. Major development occurred in the composition of the temple or shrine structure which is attributed to the *vihāra*, moreover internal shrine evolved within the rows of *vihāras*.

The mediaeval Buddhist monasteries of Bengal explored thus far were been designed with an inward orientation and was enclosed by high boundary wall to demarcate it from the outside world. A continuous gallery often surrounded the central courtyard and there might have also been a temple or *stūpa* to fulfill various religious needs of the occupants. This type of quadrangular *vihāra* is undoubtedly the most common of all Buddhist monastic plans in Asia which can be traced back to the *Kuṣāṇa* period (AD 30 - 375) such as *Takht-i-Bāhi* (Figure 4-1) and other *vihāras* of Taxila. Monastics cells are arranged roughly on a square plan with four wings around the open courtyard (Khettry, 2006).

A gateway lay at the center of a wing projecting outwards, direction of the gateway depended on the total composition of the *vihāra* complex. Major *vihāras*, such as *Pahāṛpur*, *Sālban*, *Ānanda*, *Sitākot*, *Jagaddāla* and *Rupbānmurā* have the main gateway on the north side, whereas *vihāra* no. 2 of *Bhāsuviḥāra* and *Itākbolāmūrā* have eastern and western gateways respectively, respecting individual geometries of the *vihāra* complexes.

In the early and smaller *vihāras* this gateway forms a small room or hall connected to the outer world, whereas some later examples have more than one room as a gateway complex. As the



structures were always built on a high plinth because of risk of flood water damage, the gateway connected with the outside through long flight of steps. This is also evident in various *vihāras* of southern India, as well as in the Far East (Naqi and Mollick, 2004: 73). In *Pahārpur*, a mature *vihāra*, gateway complexes were significant structures. There were also a number of structures outside the enclosure. Before entering the main hall of the gateway there were rooms which probably served as waiting halls or accommodation for the guards of the *vihāra* complex. Two votive *stūpas* stand on a square base flanking the staircase. On ascending the broad staircase the main entrance hall of the gateway was reached, which was a large square pillared hall. There were some cells attached with this outer hall, probably used as offices or strong-rooms by the head or elder of the *vihāra*. The main passages to the cells were accessed through another pillared hall (Qadir, 1980: 14-15).

In early *vihāras* of Bengal monastic cells were arranged in four wings around an open courtyard. They were almost equal in size<sup>2</sup> and were separated from one another by partition walls which vary in thickness. The front and back walls were massive compare to partition walls between two cells. Each cell has a doorway that opens onto the common verandah; doors and doorframes were made of wood while the hinges and handles were made of iron. There were corbelled niches (*kuṇḍi*) on the back and side walls of each cell<sup>3</sup>. Though concrete evidence is lacking, these niches were probably used for keeping votive images, oil lamps, reading and writing material, or other articles of everyday use. Some large *vihāras*, like *Sālbān viharā*, have only three corbelled niches on the back wall of each cell (Hossain and Dewan, 2004: 9). In the later, fourth construction phase of *Sālbān viharā*, a brick platform was introduced adjacent to the back wall as an altar for individual offering or bed for the monk<sup>4</sup> (Zakariah, 2007: 655). Residential

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<sup>2</sup> The monastic cell is uniform in size in a *vihāra* but varies *vihāra* to *vihāra*. In *Bhāsu* and *Sitakot viharā* they roughly measure 12 feet by 11 feet whereas large *vihāra* like *Pahārpur* cells are approximately 14 feet by 13 feet 6 inch.

<sup>3</sup> Identified at *Sālbān* and *Rupbānmurā viharā*

<sup>4</sup> Zakaria suggest it as bed for the monks (Zakariah, 2007: 655) whereas Hossain thinks it was altar for individual offering (Hossain and Dewan, 2004).

cells did not have any windows but ventilators. In most cases the cells had concrete floors (Blakiston, 1934: 114). Cells were roofed over with a thick slab of lime concrete, supported on wooden beams and rafters<sup>5</sup>(Ahmed, 1979: 21).

This lime concrete roof supported by beams and rafters continues to build in Bengal longtime after this Buddhist use. In the Mughal era, although vaults and domes were significant constructional elements, wooden beams could be seen to support flat roofs, especially in palaces and forts. At the *Tabkhana* Complex, a palace probably used as a *khanqah*<sup>6</sup> situated in Firuzpur of Gaur-Lakhnauti and built by Mughal Subahdar Shah Shuja (1639- 1660 AD), lime concrete flat roof can be seen. This is a brick built double storied palace where black stone slabs for the doorsills and wooden beams for the flat roof used (Husain, 2006). It is one of the flat roofs of Mughal period that used timber beams overlaid with lime (*surkhe*) concrete slabs.

Continuation of this type of roof construction can be found even in colonial Bengal. In earlier Zamindar houses of the period roofs were built using wooden beams and rafters covered with clay roof tiles and a lime concrete layer over it. In the mature phase, factory made steel beams and rafters replaced wooden beams in roof construction system. Only small span roofs are vaulted derived from Mughal architecture (Reza et al., 2007: 77).

Again in early *vihāras* each cell opens onto a uniformly wide common verandah which continues around the entire *vihāra* on the inner side. There were corbelled niches on the outer walls of cells for similar purposes, i.e., to keep oil lamps. A thick retaining wall fences it off from the roughly square shaped courtyard; in *Sitakot vihāra* that retaining wall was 4 feet wide and 1 foot high from the plinth. Verandahs also had concrete floors. Many early *vihāras* did not have any roofs over the verandah.

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<sup>5</sup>Zakaria, at his initiative a test excavation of Sitakot *vihāra* was undertaken by the department of archaeology, observed huge lumps of lime concrete with in the fallen debris (Zakariah, 2007)

<sup>6</sup>*Khanqah* is a Persian word represents resting, meditating and preaching place of a saint.

One distinguishable character of the Bengal *vihāra* is their composition of verandahs. Though the basic composition of *vihāra* developed during the *Kuṣāṇa* period, it evolved significantly. During this early phase, basic composition was based on an O-shape (Figure 4-1). *Gandhāra vihāra Takht-i-Bābī* have this O-shaped layout (Figure 4-2). All Ajanta cave *vihāras* also have this composition, where a verandah does not continue through the cell rows and forms a closed loop. No Bengal *vihāra* shows this type of arrangement. Later it evolved into an H-shape during the pre-Gupta and Gupta periods (Figure 4-3). At *Nālandā* all earlier *vihāras* were of this style where two verandahs continued through the cell rows and the other two connected the previous verandahs to form an H-shape. The only *vihāra* identified with such an arrangement in Bengal is the *vihāra* at *Shahabgonj-Bogdaha* of Gaibandha district of Bangladesh (Figure 4-4). Based on archaeological evidence Zakaria suggest its early phase as a pre-*Pāla* structure (Zakariah, 2007: 169). Although no other *vihāras* of Bengal have similar arrangements, possibilities of new identification cannot be overthrown since exploration of many *vihāras* have remained partial at best and careful new excavation could identify this style in many early *vihāras*, especially in their early phases.

Recent excavations (2007-8) have identified an interesting phase at the central shrine of *Ananda vihāra* (Alam et al., 2008: 38), which has been identified as construction phase four. Considering this shrine as a previous *vihāra*, though it sounds peculiar but it fulfills all requirements as a *vihāra* itself, it shows similar composition to the Ajanta cave *vihāra* and *Mahābodhi vihāra* of previous stated H-shape (Figure 4-5). According to the excavators it was a complete change of geometry than the previous three construction phases. Due to lack of archaeological material it is not certain why they adopted this shape or if it was a central shrine or a *vihāra* in its own right at this stage. If this assumption is correct then the small size of this *vihāra* would suggest it to be of earlier construction than anticipated that case many things have to be rethought in early *vihāra* architecture of Bengal.

Again, unlike other *vihāras*, *vihāra* no 4 of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* has a different arrangement (Figure 4-6), which represents the next step of evolution into the pin-wheel pattern. Monastery no 4 is an alteration on previous monastery no 3, probably during the sixth century AD. To describe formal and functional zoning of *Pahārpur viharā*, Naqi carefully identified this shifting of circulation axis as a move to the pin-wheel pattern (Naqi and Mollick, 2004: 72-75) which is a common arrangement pattern for most Bengal *vihāras* (Figure 4-7). In that case an end of a verandah goes through the cell row and the other stops at adjacent the verandah that makes a form of spin-wheel. Mature version of this pattern can be identified in *vihāras* all over Bengal and makes it a distinguishable characteristic of Bengal *vihāras*. Presence of this style at a later edition of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* suggests Bengal's influence over them during the later period when *Nālandā* begin to decline and Bengal rise as a center of Buddhist development. Though this pin-wheel arrangement was not an alien incorporation to the *vihāra* plan, rather was inherent in different forms which achieve its maturity in Bengal. In *Gandhāra* pin-wheel arrangement can be identified within the cell arrangement as early as the *Kuṣāṇa* period though verandahs were absent there (Figure 4-8).

Early and small *vihāras* do not had any internal shrine structure rather they had an external shrine adjacent the *vihāra*; however later shrines are introduced and become an important element of the *vihāra*. At the first stage, the central cells of the opposite wings of gateways converted to a worship space (*vihāra* no 1 and 2 of *Bhāsu viharā* see Figure 4-9 & Figure 4-10). Later two more shrines developed similarly at the center of the other two wings (early phase of *Sitākot viharā* see Figure 4-11) to worship more idols. At this stage no modification was made on the partition walls, even in most cases their position was not aligned with the real centre as it was not planned earlier. Each of these shrine cells contain a substantial ornamental brick pedestal or platform for installation of deities or for other ritual purposes connected with cult worship. Later worship become more important in *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhism and shrine space of a preplanned

layout took more space and become wider (*vihāra* no 1 and 2 of *Bhāsu vihāra*). A similar approach can be seen at the Gupta *vihāras* at *Nālandā* (Monastery no 2, 4, 5 & 6), where to accommodate the large shrine space in the row the back wall was pushed outward.

Later the ritual practice became much similar to the Vedic religious practices and showed a clear intention to establish Buddhism as a rival to Hinduism. Eventually it led to the establishment of a series of icons paralleling Hindu belief structure and adopting similar hierarchy in overall religious system. That resulted in the need for similar architectural space to house the god as well as to place the offerings from the devotees (Rashid, 2006: 6). When expansion of a cell would not provide enough space for the idols, merging two adjacent cells solved the problem which could be seen at the Ajanta cave (*vihāra* no 16<sup>7</sup>) of 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. During this enlargement phase one thing is identifiable, that is the addition of two more idols and three cells shrine evolved. Zakaria identified these type three cell shrine in *Sitākot vihāra* (Zakariah, 2007: 106).

At this point *Bhakti* became an important part of the Buddhist religious practice and ritual offerings, such as flowers, incense and jewelry, were an integral part of expressing such devotion. Further, similar hierarchies like Hindus were also established in terms of offering and performing rituals. A Hindu temple, conventionally, has strong hierarchical sequence of its different parts. It represents a journey from light to darkness, i.e. from an open and large space to a confined and small one. In its simplest form a Hindu temple can be divided into two major parts. The first one, where the deity is housed is the most sacred and most protected part and is known as the ‘womb-chamber’, *Garbhāgriha*. The second part, a zone that works as a transition between the open to the closed space, is the place designated to perform rituals by the laities who place offering. It is known as the *mandapa* (Rashid, 2006: 6).

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<sup>7</sup>Varahadeva, the minister of *Vākāṭaka* king Harisena (A.D. 475-500), dedicated Ajanta Cave 16 to the Buddhist *saṅgha*.

The Buddhist religious evolution continued further and the *maṇḍapa* became a necessity to facilitate more public rituals. To accommodate the *maṇḍapa* in the rock-cut Ajanta cave *vihāras* (monastery no. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 15, 17, 21 & 23) of the Deccana new cell was introduced after the shrine cell as a *garbhāgriha*, whereas the cell within the row became the *maṇḍapa*. In rock-cut architecture it will have posed significant difficulty to add cells in front of an existing one, given that the former was already hewn out as a passage -the reason why it was convenient to cut out another cell behind the exiting one. Spink affirmed that these shrines were introduced within a short time period, between 460 and 480 AD, during the reign of Emperor Harisena of the *Vākāṭaka* dynasty<sup>8</sup> (Spink and Bronkhorst, 2005: 32), whereas according to Phuoc's dating, *vihāra* no 6 and 7 were earliest among these cave *vihāras* and these were built around 450 to 475 AD (Phuoc, 2010). The only *vihāra* identified in Bengal till date with the regressive type of shrine arrangement is the *vihāra* at *Shabeegonj-Bodhgaha*, which was only partially excavated and the plan drawn by Zakaria does not provide a comprehensive understanding, although it clearly shows a backward offset (Figure 4-4). Another *vihāra* with backward offset is the southern shrine of *Jagaddāla mahāvihāra* where the main shrine situated on its eastern wing shows later phase of the wing shrine development (Figure 4-12).

The only *vihāra* to have a different arrangement among the Ajanta caves is monastery no 20, where a columned *maṇḍapa* was added in front of the *garbhāgriha* (Figure 4-13). This is a common type for *Nālandā*, where a *maṇḍapa* was added in front of the cell in most cases as a platform. Monastery no 2, 4 & 6 of *Nālandā* have such platforms in front of the shrine cell (Figure 4-6), and in some cases the *maṇḍapa* was a columned hall instead of a closed cell. The probable reason

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<sup>8</sup>The *Vākāṭakas* were a royal Indian dynasty that originated from the Deccan in the mid-third century AD. Their kingdom is believed to have extended from the southern edges of Malwa and Gujarat in the north to the Tungabhadra River in the south as well as from the Arabian Sea in the western to the edges of Chhattisgarh in the east. During, the Gupta King Chandragupta II (AD 375-415), the *Vākāṭaka* realm was practically a part of the Gupta Empire.

to build columned *maṇḍapa* was to keep the existing circulation pattern unaltered. Excavated *viḥāras* of Bengal primarily belonged to and developed from this group.

As has been mentioned by many historians, the Gupta emperors were establishing their supremacy in central India where Ajanta cave *viḥāras* were hewn. Samudra Gupta (AD 335-375) defeated a king named Vyaghra-deva, a feudatory of Prithivisena I (AD 348-375) of the *Vākāṭaka* dynasty, and his father, king Rudrasena I (AD 344-348). Likewise, Samudra Gupta had conquered eastern part of *Māhva*<sup>9</sup>. Later Chandra Gupta II (AD 380-415) (Spink and Bronkhorst, 2005) entered into matrimonial alliance with the *Vākāṭaka* dynasty that posed a clear political advantage to the Gupta over the Deccan region (Kumar, 2010: 562). From a stylistic point of view it is clear that these have strong Gupta influence. In the case of cave no 20 which was built by Upendragupta (Spink, 2009: 48), another feudatory of the *Vākāṭaka* dynasty, the beautiful decorating front of projecting *maṇḍapa* described as “brought forward to secure the cracked ceiling” does not seem the only reason rather it looks an experiment to test other parallel style. This kind of experiment is not rare in Buddhist architecture, such as though at *Nālandā* front projecting *maṇḍapa* was a common style backward projection can be seen at *Mahābodhi viḥāra* (Figure 4-14).

At *Bhāsu viḥāra*, monastery no 1 and 2 have projecting *maṇḍapa*. Archaeological explorations have not yet identified their complete ground plan but show a clear projecting *maṇḍapa* similar to those at *Sitākot* and *Pahārpur viḥāra*. *Viḥāra* no 2 has traces of a columned *maṇḍapa* (columned form of D3, Figure 4-15); however no columns have identified in *viḥāra* no 1, which suggests the *maṇḍapa* there was probably either an open platform or a closed cell. In *Sitākot viḥāra* though it has a projecting *maṇḍapa*, the internal arrangement of its *garbhāgriha* proposes that the idea had developed from B3 of Figure 4-15. Partial excavation conducted on this site has revealed only

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<sup>9</sup>*Māhva* is a region in west-central northern India. Historical *Māhva* region includes districts of western Madhya Pradesh and parts of south-eastern Rajasthan.

two construction phases that appearance as a developed shape of this form. There is a possibility that the future excavations could bring out similar shape from its underneath.

The addition of ambulatory pathways (*pradakshina path*) is the next development phase observable in the wing shrine. There is some uncertainty regarding whether *maṇḍapa* or ambulatory path was adopted first; however, formal architectural analysis (Figure 4-15) suggests that *maṇḍapa* was followed by the adoption of the ambulatory path. Some shrines that do not have a formal *maṇḍapa* but an ambulatory path could suggest an attempt at missing a step to follow a trend that was current at the time. *Vihāra* no 10 of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* has such arrangement. In Bengal, while no *vihāra* has been excavated indicating such an attempt, considering the fourth phase of the *Sālban* central shrine as a *vihāra* would show a composition of this nature (Figure 4-5).

Alteration of ritual requirements was a key factor for incorporating ambulatory pathways into the wing shrine. Similar transformation could be seen on the main shrine structure of many Bengal *vihāras* and probably it was followed in the wing shrine. Why ambulation became an important religious activity is not clear but ambulation could be traced back as early as the first century BC to the rock cut *chaitya* halls. Although from a general perspective the *chaitya* appears different to the *vihāra* shrine except for the ambulatory path, from an architectural perspective their functional arrangements are alike. *Garbhāgriha*, *maṇḍapa* and the *pradakshina* path of a *vihāra* shrine are identical with the *stūpa*, front space of the *stūpa* and the ambulatory path of a *chaitya* hall. As far as epigraphical evidences go, the *chaitya* was built from an early age of Buddhist architecture but its incorporation as an internal shrine within a *vihāra* can only be traced as far back as the fifth century AD. Upendragupta planned his ambitious *chaitya* in AD 461, whereas construction of another cave *vihāra* 26 started in AD 462 under Asmaka's authorization (Spink, 2009: 9,11); both were early examples of cave *vihāra* with the *chaitya* as an internal shrine. Probably in brick *vihāras* *pradakshina path* of the shrine structure was incorporated as an alternate approach.



The earliest and the simplest form of the *vihāra* shrine with *pradakṣhina* path (D4 or D5 of Figure 4-15) contains a *garbhāgriha* and a *maṇḍapa* identified at *vihāra* no 4, 6 and 10 of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* (Figure 4-6). In Bengal, though there are indications of the possibility that this could have existed in many *vihāras*, lack of archaeological material makes it difficult to identify this form with any certainty.

The next form of the *vihāra* shrine with *pradakṣhina* path (B4 of Figure 4-15) developed from the three-cell shrine with single *maṇḍapa*. Early phase of *Sitākot vihāra* indicates such an arrangement, though partial excavation reports do not provide full understanding. From the excavated ground plan (Figure 4-11) and site observations the existence of an earlier single-cell *maṇḍapa* can be seen. No other Bengal *vihāras* could be identified with such an arrangement, although the influence of this shape could be traced at Java where Candi Plaosan, a *Mahāyāna* temple, developed following this shape (Figure 4-16). Probably it later developed towards A4 of Figure 4-15 as a columned version.

Compared to the central shrine of *Pabārpur vihāra*, which was always been in focus, shrines on the wings received scant attention from the excavators and researchers. The published material does not contain any material on the developmental phases of wing shrines, providing only the evidence from its mature form. Based on architectural analyses it can be assumed that this mature form developed from A4 of Figure 4-15, which was also identified at *Sitākot vihāra* in its later phase. Probably A5 of Figure 4-15 was not taken due to circulation problem. In the A5 model wing dwellers have to ambulate all over the shrine to pass it which was not desirable, moreover in the meantime following the development trend this shrine becomes very large in shape. At *Sitākot vihāra* this problem was solved through the columned *maṇḍapa* which provides a direct communication for the wing dwellers. In case of *Pabārpur vihāra*, which adopted the closed cell *maṇḍapa*, the passages become a necessity to solve this problem and provide direct communication for the wing dwellers (A5 of Figure 4-15).

#### 4.1.2 Types of *vihāra*/ Buddhist architecture of Bengal

Based on architectural form, materials and construction systems Phuoc (Phuoc, 2010: 46) divides Buddhist *vihāras* into mainly three distinct groups. The Indian group generally employs more permanent material, such as stone and bricks, the Chinese group often selected perishable material like timber, and the Tibetan group preferred a combination of rubble and wood where feasible. As early *vihāras* preceding such developed examples were constructed of perishable material, many of these have disappeared. However, in India early rock-cut caves have been identified in Bihar and the Deccan, which are dated as early as the Mauryan period (from the third to second century BCE onwards). Later free-standing structural *vihāras* developed in these regions by the 5th century AD, whereas rock-cut caves continued to be carved out in parallel. The *Takht-i-Bāhī vihāra*, like other counterparts at Taxila and elsewhere in *Gandhāra*<sup>10</sup>, were constructed of stones of varying size arranged in a diaper fashion as early as the *Kuṣāṇa* period (Rowland, 1954: 82). In contrast, the Bengal *vihāras* explored till date of show an absence of entirely stone built monastic structure. Because of the unavailability of stone, it was always employed as a precious material alongside brick, where the latter was used as the main construction material. Though stone built temple was a common feature in of Hindu-Buddhist architecture of Medieval India, large brick built Buddhist shrines have been excavated from most mediaeval Buddhist sites of Bengal.

Although it is hard to say when brick was first used as construction material in this region but there are pre-Mauryan references to the use of brick in Buddhist architecture. At Vaisali, a pre-

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<sup>10</sup> Today the name *Gandhāra*, once the second greatest Buddhist Holy land after India, no longer remains in the Asian map and only Kandahar in Afghanistan distantly retain the name of this famous region. At its height between the second–third centuries AD, the core of *Gandhāra* encompassed the territory of Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan and was bounded by the Hindu Kush and Karakorum mountains in the west and the north, respectively, with its most important centre being Taxila.

Mauryan *stūpa* was excavated where in its first enlargement burnt brick were used. In the Great *stūpa* at *Sāñchi*, the nucleus of which, attributed to the Mauryan emperor *Aśoka* (c. 372- 332 BC), was a brick structure about half the size of the present *stūpa*. Traces of early brick built *vihāra* identified at *Pāṭaliputra* was built by baked bricks set in lime mortar, which belonged to the first century BC to second century AD (Vishnu, 1993: 178-180).

Recently excavated (2000 onwards) site of *Wari-Bateswar* in southeast Bengal shows the presence of brick construction from as early as the fourth to the third century BC, possibly from the Mauryan, or perhaps even pre-Mauryan, period (Imam, 2008). Later excavation work in *Wari-Bateswar* confirmed this theory and has established an early historic horizon for Bengal. In 2004 the structural remains of a road was exposed and in the following year another compacted area was excavated and identified as a by-lane of the same road. These investigations revealed overlying compacted areas of brick grit (Jahan, 2010: 138) of pre-Mauryan period. Although, it has not been determined when the first masonry *vihāra* was built in Bengal, it can be assumed that this was quite early because of the presence of many large and mature brick built mediaeval *vihāras*.

Analyzing the archaeological findings it can be summarized that the use of stone in architecture was always precious in Bengal. The trend to use stone could only be identified in the making of images, which is evident from the large number of stone images excavated from this region, whereas architectural fragments in stone are not that common. Most common stone built architectural component found is the column (a of Figure 4-17). Another stone built architectural component commonly used was the door lintel, however use of the stone door seals were identified on earlier *vihāras* such as *Jagaddala* as a decorative elements (b of Figure 4-17). Use of stone door frames continues on later period which were identified from later *vihāras*. Use of stone for the drainage system is also identified at *Pabārpur vihāra* (Hossain and Alam, 2003: 8).

Use of wood as a construction material was also identified at some *vihāras* (Ahmed, 1979) as beams and rafters. Thus Buddhist architecture of Bengal was mainly brick built type where stone and wood were used as supporting building materials.

Again based on chronology Buddhist *vihāras* can be divided into eight stages and types (Phuoc, 2010: 46) are as follows,

- (a) Communal *vihāra* without the *stūpa*,
- (b) Organic or unplanned *vihāra* centering on a major *stūpa*,
- (c) Rock-cut cave *vihāra*,
- (d) Planned quadrangular *vihāra* with *stūpa* and shrine located in the same site,
- (e) Monastic university or *Mahāvihāra*,
- (f) *Vihāra* with separate precinct for shrine or *stūpa*,
- (g) *Vihāra* with centrally sacred precinct consisting of several functionally different structure,
- (h) Fortress and/or hilltop *vihāra*.

Bengal had only few of these types. Explored Buddhist *vihāras* of Bengal are mainly from the Gupta period onwards that does not offer any information about earlier *vihāras*, although epigraphically existence of *vihāras* in this region is traceable as early as the time of *Aśoka* (c. 372-332 BC). That is why nothing is known at present about the architecture of these ancient *vihāras* of Bengal; but it can be assumed that these were built mainly with perishable material such as woods. Further research and excavation are necessary to explore these ancient *vihāras* of Bengal.

The communal *vihāra* without the *stūpa* and the organic or unplanned *vihāra* centering on a major *stūpa* are forms of *vihāra* architecture mostly built during earlier phases of Buddhist development. Till now similar types have not been identified in Bengal and the lack of mountain terrain limits the chance of occurrence of rock cut *vihāras* and consequently, has not been identified. The other

four types proposed by Phuoc (Phuoc, 2010: 46) does not fit well in the case of Bengal Buddhist *vihāra* classification.

Analyzing excavated Bengal *vihāras*, these could be classified mainly into two types,

- (a) *Vihāra* with separate precinct for shrine or *stūpa*
- (b) Planned quadrangular *vihāra* with shrine located in the same site and

The earlier and small *vihāras* of Bengal were mainly *vihāra* with separate precinct for shrine; these *vihāra* complexes had two zones, one was the residential zone, generally termed *vihāra* and the other was for the shrine structure, which commonly known as *mandir*. It is hard to establish which one was built first or if both were built together, but it is probable that the *vihāra* developed later to provide accommodation for the monks. In most cases eastern orientation of the main shrine suggest that the residential zone was built later respecting the geometry of the shrine.

Many planned quadrangular *vihāras* with shrine located on the same site have been identified in Bengal. Among these *vihāras* *Itāṅkholāmūrā*, *Rupbānmūrā*, *Bhāsu vihāra* and *Bihārdhap* are significant. Except *Bhāsu vihāra* the other *vihāra* complexes stated in this type had a residential zone and a shrine, whereas *Bhāsu vihāra* was a large complex with two residential *vihāras* and two shrines. During the later phases more shrine or religious structures evolved within the residential zone.

Two individual *vihāras* identified within the surveyed zone, *Sitākot vihāra* and *Jagaddāla vihāra*, do not have a separate precinct shrine structure but have internal shrines attached with the residential zone. Based on the wing shrine development trend discussed before, they belong to the mature phase of the *vihāra* with separate precinct for shrine type; probably there were separate precinct shrine structures which are missing.

The next type, planned quadrangular *vihāra* with shrine located in the same site, are the well-known larger *vihāras* such as *Pahāṛpur*, *Ānanda*, *Sālban* and *Bhojā vihāra*. They have a central shrine

structure with surrounding residential accommodation. All four larger *vihāras* stated in this type had a northern entrance as well as their central shrine was cruciform in shape with a northern approach.

## 4.2 Style of shrine structure

At this point it is necessary to understand the architectural style of the medieval Bengal shrine structure. To do so a broad understanding of other northern Indian shrine forms, that preceded this style, is necessary. With a clear understanding on the north Indian shrine style, the next step will be tracing the evolution of medieval Bengal shrine form as a style.

The authors of the Indian *Śilpasastras* had an idea about the existence of various styles or order of architecture in India. Much has been written during the mediaeval time on the Indian shrines, their main styles and classifications. The *Viśvakarmaprakāśa*, the *BṛhatSamhitā*, the *Matsyapurāṇa*, the *Agni Purāṇa*, The *Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāra* and many such other early works classify shrines into various kinds (Bhattacharyya, 1986: 158). According to Sinha the traditional classification of Indian shrine architecture is based, arguably, on the geographical distribution of monuments in medieval India (Sinha, 1996: 399). In some northern Indian texts, like the *Aparājitaṭṭṭhā* and the *Kṣirārṇava*, mediaeval Indian shrine architecture was classified in fourteen types and by others, like the *Aparājitaṭṭṭhā*, into eight on its second list (Deva, 1975: 90). However, earliest known orders of Indian shrine architecture have only two major groups: the *Nāgara* and the *Drāvida* (Bhattacharyya, 1986: 161). *Nāgara* tradition is present in the northern, western and eastern parts of India, whereas *Drāvida* is found only in the Indian peninsular region (i.e., central and southern India). In a few contemporary Indian writings they are referred to as "styles", such as "*Nāgara* or Indo-Aryan style" and "Dravidian style". But Hardy argues these being "languages" rather than "styles" because, as they occur across a vast area and time span. According to Hardy, "*the information they provide (Indian Nāgara, Drāvida and other styles) does not gives as much detail as European Classical architectural style provides*" (Hardy, 2002: 85). He further argues that they provide a vocabulary that can be put together in a number of distinct ways which may be termed "mode". There are three primary modes of the *Nāgara* language; *Latina*, *Valabhī*, and *Phāmsanā* (Khare, 2004: 33). The *Latina* and *Phāmsanā* modes are known in eastern India as *Rekhā* and *Piṭhā* or

*Bhadra*, whereas the rare *Valabhī* mode is known as *Khāḍḍharā* (McCutchion, 1972: 3). There were also two more secondary modes of the *Nāgara* tradition developed from the primary mode, *Śikhari*, and *Bhūmija*.

The earlier mode of *Nāgara* is *Latina* (Figure 4-18); a *Latina* shrine is a single unit with a square sanctum in plan where the ground plan exhibits a number of graduated projections on each face of the square sanctum called *rathaka* (Khare, 2004: 34). These projections on the walls of the temple appear to be secondary aedicules in the form of miniature shrines. The temple of the *Latina* mode is distinguished by its *Śikhara*<sup>11</sup> over the cubic sanctum. The *Śikhara* gradually inclines inward and projections on the substructure are carried up and continued on the superstructure. The *Śikhara* is surmounted by a flat and spheroid member ribbed at the edges called *amalasaraka*. The crowning element which consists of the auspicious *kalasa* may have an emblem of the divinity in the temple.

The next mode of the *Nāgara* language is the *Valabhī* (Figure 4-19). Since this shrine is mainly used for temples dedicated to the mother goddess or Shakti shrines, where the goddess is represented in seven forms of *saptamatrikas* and kept in a row, this arrangement required a rectangular plan for the shrine. The *mandovara* of the shrine is similar to the *Latina* shrine but *Śikhara* and *mastaka* are distinguished, covered by a barrel-vaulted elongated roof.

The third mode of the *Nāgara* language is the *Phāmsanā*, distinguished by its pyramidal structure made up by eaves mouldings with recesses in between (Figure 4-20). These shrines have a square ground plan with a cubical sanctum. The pyramidal tower may be crowned by a similar *mastaka* as that of the *Latina Śikhara*.

*Bhūmija* is the rich and pleasing variety of *Nāgara*, popular in *Māhva*, western India, and northern Deccan. It has a central *Latina* projection on each of the four faces; the quadrants so formed are

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<sup>11</sup>*Śikhara* is the superstructure, tower, or spire above the sanctuary and also above the pillared *maṇḍapas* (porches or halls); it is the most dominant and characteristic feature of the *Nāgara* temple architecture.



filled with miniature spires in vertical and horizontal rows right up to the top (Sivaramamurti et al., 2011). Stella Kramrisch, who first identified *Bhūmija* characters (Kramrisch and Burnier, 1976: 218-219), further recognized its distinctive grouping of miniature *Śikhara*s of diminishing heights on the four quadrants between the spines, the number of these miniature *Śikhara*s varying from three to five rows vertically and five to nine rows horizontally (Deva, 1975: 90). The finest and most representative *Bhūmija* temple is at Un. Though, unfortunately, they are considerably damaged, judging from the remains, they must have been very elegant structures. The best preserved *Bhūmija* temple is the Udayeśvara (built: 1059–82 AD), situated at Udaipur in Madhya Pradesh (Figure 4-21). The *Śikhara*, based on a stellate plan, is divided into quadrants by four *Latās*, or offsets, each one of which has five rows of aedicule. The large hall has three entrance porches, one to the front and two on the sides, and walls that are richly carved. The whole complex, including seven subsidiary shrines, is placed on a broad, tall platform. This style continued up to the sixteenth century AD, many examples having been found in north Deccan and Berār.

The *Śikhari* evolves out of the matrix of *Latina* and belong to the same tradition as an elaborated form (Figure 4-22), but represents a more developed stage just like *Bhūmija* (Hardy, 2002: 87). From the tenth century AD onwards the *Śikhari* type of spire became increasingly popular. In its developed form it consisted of a central *Latina* spire (*mūlaśṛṅga*) with one or more rows of half spires added on the sides (*urah-śṛṅga*) and the base strung with miniature spires (*śṛṅgas*). The corners, too, are sometimes filled with quarter spires, the whole mass of carved masonry recalling a mountain with a cluster of subsidiary peaks (Sivaramamurti et al., 2011). The *Latina*

details, its curved *Śikhara* with its *Āmalaka*<sup>12</sup> and its layered mouldings, are inherited by the later modes: *Śikhari* and *Bhūmija*.

A mode, as described before, is not a fixed composition but an organizing principle and within each mode there emerges specific and repeated compositions that may be called "types"(Hardy, 2002: 85). The classification of languages and modes put forward here cannot be found in any of the traditional codes: it is based on making sense of the architectural forms using names that have generally become accepted.

With this basic knowledge on the style of North Indian temples, our concern is how the style presented itself in Bengal during, before and after the Guptas. There is an extreme dearth of ancient monuments in Bengal because of unfavorable climate, use of impermanent building material, erosions of rivers and human interference. In spite of the extreme scarcity of monuments, early terracotta plaques<sup>13</sup> discovered mainly from *Chandraketugarh*, West Bengal, certainly give an impression of the architectural types prevailing in ancient Bengal before the advent of the Gupta period. On the basis of these plaques it is possible to identify many flat-roofed structures, pavilions with *Chaitya* vault, as well as structures with curved roof topped with a finial (Haque, 2007: 152). Nineteen of the plaques show complete or fragmentary façades of flat-roofed pavilions constructed of two columns supporting a lintel, five plaques show *Chaitya* vault and two plaques shows real *Chaitya* motif. Whereas only three toy-carts show two tier pavilion with a curved roof (Haque, 1999: 438, 450). These plaques belong to a period from the second century BC to the sixth century AD.

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<sup>12</sup> The *Āmalaka* (Indian gooseberry fruit motif) is the crown of a *Nagara* temple. The *Āmalaka* has a cogged rim. Above the truncated body of a *Śikhara* it claps the shaft and it surmounted by the finial (*Śūpikā*) with the vase (*Kalāśa*) as its most conspicuous part.

<sup>13</sup> Several scholars have carried out detailed study on early terracotta plaques of Bengal. Most recently, Haque (1999) published an article which covers 60 pieces of terracotta plaques showing one or the other type of architecture from ancient Bengal which includes previously noticed partial work done by Biswas (Biswas, 1985) and Bautze (Bautze, 1995).

As stated by Ajay Khare (Khare, 2004: 33), *Nāgara* language with its modes was well known to the builders of Bengal in the mediaeval (early Pala) period and they were following the north Indian tradition of temple architecture. From the architectural fragments, votive shrines and extant remains it is amply clear that *Valabbī* and *Phāmsanā* mode of temple building were well known to the builders of Bengal but Bengal do not have many surviving examples of these two modes of temple building from the early period. Almost all surviving examples of the early temple architecture of eastern India find expression mainly in the *Latina* mode (Khare, 2004: i-ii). Although the *Latina* was the primary mode of practice, Khare (Khare, 2005) identifies the use of the *Valabbī* mode as an essential characteristic of the temple architecture of Bengal as an aedicule (Figure 4-23).

There are many examples of the *Latina* shrine represented as a single cell structure in sculptures, architectural fragments and on votive objects of the mediaeval period housed in various museums, both within Bengal and abroad. Among these the *Jhewari*<sup>14</sup> and *Bangarb*<sup>15</sup> votives represent a clear *Latina Śikhara* shrine (Khare, 2004: 39). *Bangarb* votive (Figure 4-24) consist of a square solid shaft carved on four sides and surmounted by a curvilinear *Śikhara*. The sanctum portion is raised over a cruciform plinth. In case of *Jhewari* votive (Figure 4-25), the curvilinear *Śikhara* is capped by an *Āmalaka* with a *Stūpa* finial on top. Here the sanctum is also over the cruciform plinth but niches on the four faces are empty (Haque, 2007: 180). whereas the *Latina Śikhara* shown in *Tetrawan* and *Wari* Buddha sculpture and in the basalt lintel housed in Indian Museum, Kolkata, are in relief and only the tower part is carved (Khare, 2004: 39).

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<sup>14</sup> The bronze templet collected from Chittagong district now in Indian Museum, Calcutta.

<sup>15</sup> The Black stone templet collected from Dinajpur district and now in Bangladesh National Museum.

Seven manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* of 1015 AD<sup>16</sup> have been identified by Enamul Haque (Haque, 2007: 180) at Cambridge University Library contain artists impression of different types of Buddhist shrines of Bengal. These manuscripts were the actual reproduction of the architectural types existing at the time or earlier. Three of these are *Śikhara-śirsha-bhadra*<sup>17</sup> temples - *Mahattari Tara*, *Tulaksbetra Lokanatha* and *Dedapura Lokanatha* of *Varendra*, which suggest during that period *Śikhara-śirsha-bhadra* shrine was more common in Bengal, particularly in the northern region. Another Buddhist manuscript *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*<sup>18</sup>, copied around 1090 AD, contains a large number of illustrations, many of which show different types of shrine structures. There are two shrines of *Śikhara-śirsha-bhadra* type and two have square opening surmounted by *Śikhara*.

Explored votives, sculptures and stone tablets prove that the *Latina* shrine was a common form for all parts of the eastern India, namely Magadha and Bengal. However, in Bengal the extant temple structures in *Latina* form were found only in the western and southern zones.

In miniature representations the *Phāmsanā* mode is used more often in Bengal than the other two modes of the *Nāgara* language. Though no *Phāmsanā* votive shrine has been identified in Bengal till date (2011), representations are mainly in relief, either on the sides of a *Stūpa*, at the bottom of the pillars or on other architectural fragments<sup>19</sup>. In the majority of representations of the

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<sup>16</sup> *Mahāyāna* sutras were first written down in the first century BC and *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* was one of the very first of *Mahāyāna* sutras (Mäll, 2005: 96). These particular manuscripts, which are copies of 1015 AD, were collected from *Nālandā* monastery of Bihar.

<sup>17</sup> These are *Bhadra* (*Phāmsanā*) temples surmounted by *Latina Śikhara*. This type probably a later development in Bengal; this type is a conjunction of *Latina* and *Phāmsanā* mode.

<sup>18</sup> These manuscripts were copied in 8<sup>th</sup> regnal year of King *Harivarman* of *Varman* Dynasty, who ruled in south-eastern Bengal between the end of the eleventh and first half of the twelfth century AD. These manuscripts now lie shared between the Baroda State Museum of India and an anonymous private collector in Europe.

<sup>19</sup> Several scholars have carried out detailed study on *Phāmsanā* temple of Bengal. Most recently, Khare worked on architectural fragments, votives and the representation of *Phāmsanā* form in architecture. Earlier Saraswati (1934), Haque (2007) and Bandyopadhyay (2002) have done detailed study on the *Phāmsanā* mode as depicted on the terracotta plaques, sculptures and also in manuscript paintings, these studies have immense value.

*Phāmsanā* shrine, it is shown as a trefoil arched pavilion form topped by three or five tiered pyramidal tower consisting of eaves mouldings. The face shows a configuration of the *gavaksha* motif on top of the trefoil arch. In some cases a *kirtimukha* is used on top of the arch. Such examples can be seen on the many Pala period *stūpa* votives kept in the Indian Museum, Kolkata (fig. 3.21 & 3.22).

Five temples with receding tiers surmounted by an *Āmalaka* have been identified in *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* sutras. In addition more three temples, described before as *Śikhara-śirsha-bhadra*, also identified as a conjunction of *Latina* and *Phāmsanā* mode which logically a later development in Bengal.

From the above description of the modes of the *Nāgara* tradition of shrine architecture, it is clear that the mediaeval shrine architecture of Bengal, as depicted on votives objects and architectural fragments, received influences from Magadha but was mainly part of the north Indian *Nāgara* tradition (Khare, 2004: 49).

Analyzing the previous data some important points can be observed in the early shrine architecture of Bengal:

- (a) Flat roofs without spires;
- (b) The earliest mode of the *Phāmsanā* was three tiers;
- (c) The later *Phāmsanā* developed five to seven tiered;
- (d) The *Latina* was used commonly and widely;
- (e) *Śikhara-śirsha-bhadra* or *Latina* over a *Phāmsanā* shrine evolved.

Coomaraswamy (Coomaraswamy and Schroeder, 1993: 90) speaks about the developmental trends in Indian art as, “*The force of tradition is strong, and Indian art like other arts has always by preference made use of existing types, rather than invented or adopted wholly new ones. The case is exactly parallel*

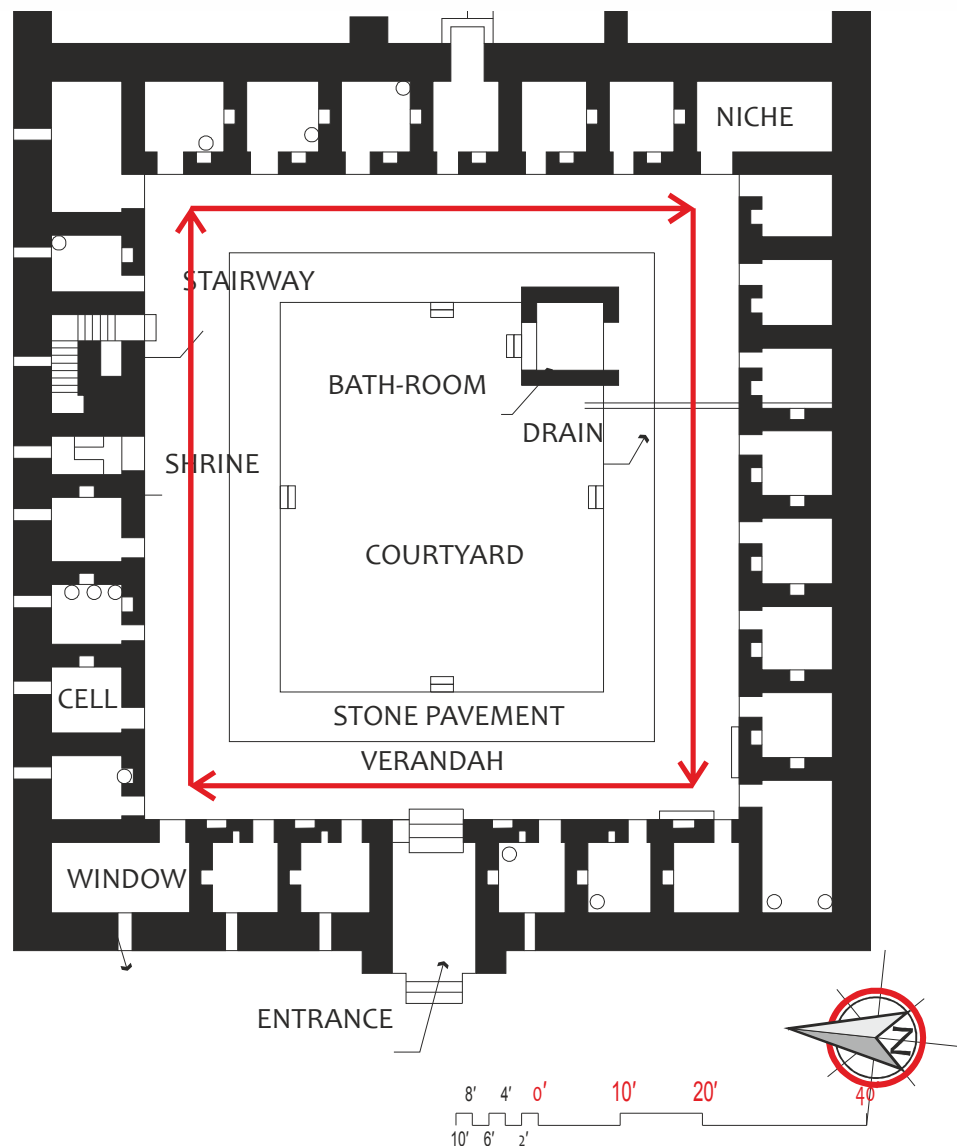
to that of religious development, in which the past always survives.” Based on the above idea and these listed points trend of the *śikhara* development of Bengal can be drawn as Figure 4-26.

From explored database of early Bengal shrine architecture discussed in the next chapter, it is quite clear that there was a developmental trend towards cruciform structure as well as many cruciform shrines. Whereas, existence of *Latina*, *Valabhī*, and *Phāmsanā* modes in Bengal do not provide any clear idea about the superstructures of these cruciform shrines. But Adam Hardy (Hardy, 1995) argued, there are two characteristics that are universal among the developed forms of Indian temple. First, the "aedicular composition" which means the whole temple form is made up of many small temple forms (aedicules) of various kinds, conceived three-dimensionally and as if embedded or interpenetrating. Secondly, there is a sense of growth towards centrifugal movement, which means that the interrelationships between the aedicular components express a process of emergence, expansion, and proliferation, and simultaneously a process of dissolution, as burgeoning entities lose individuality in a sea of repetition and begin to break up and fall apart. Based on this idea and the previous findings about the availability of *Latina* in Bengal, it can be assumed that the superstructure of these structures was developed from *Latina* mode of *Nāgara* trend. Existence of multiple spires over a shrine can be seen on a stone image of *Manjuvajra* (Figure 4-27) explored from Munshigonj district of Bangladesh where the main shrine is also in the *Latina* mode of *Nāgara* trend. The Pagan temple, which bears evidences of direct influence from Bengal, also have *Latina* mode of spires on its top.

**LOCATED AT**  
Julian monastery,  
near Taxila,  
Punjab, Pakistan.



**Location**



**Figure 4.2:** Kuṣāṇa vihāra O-shaped

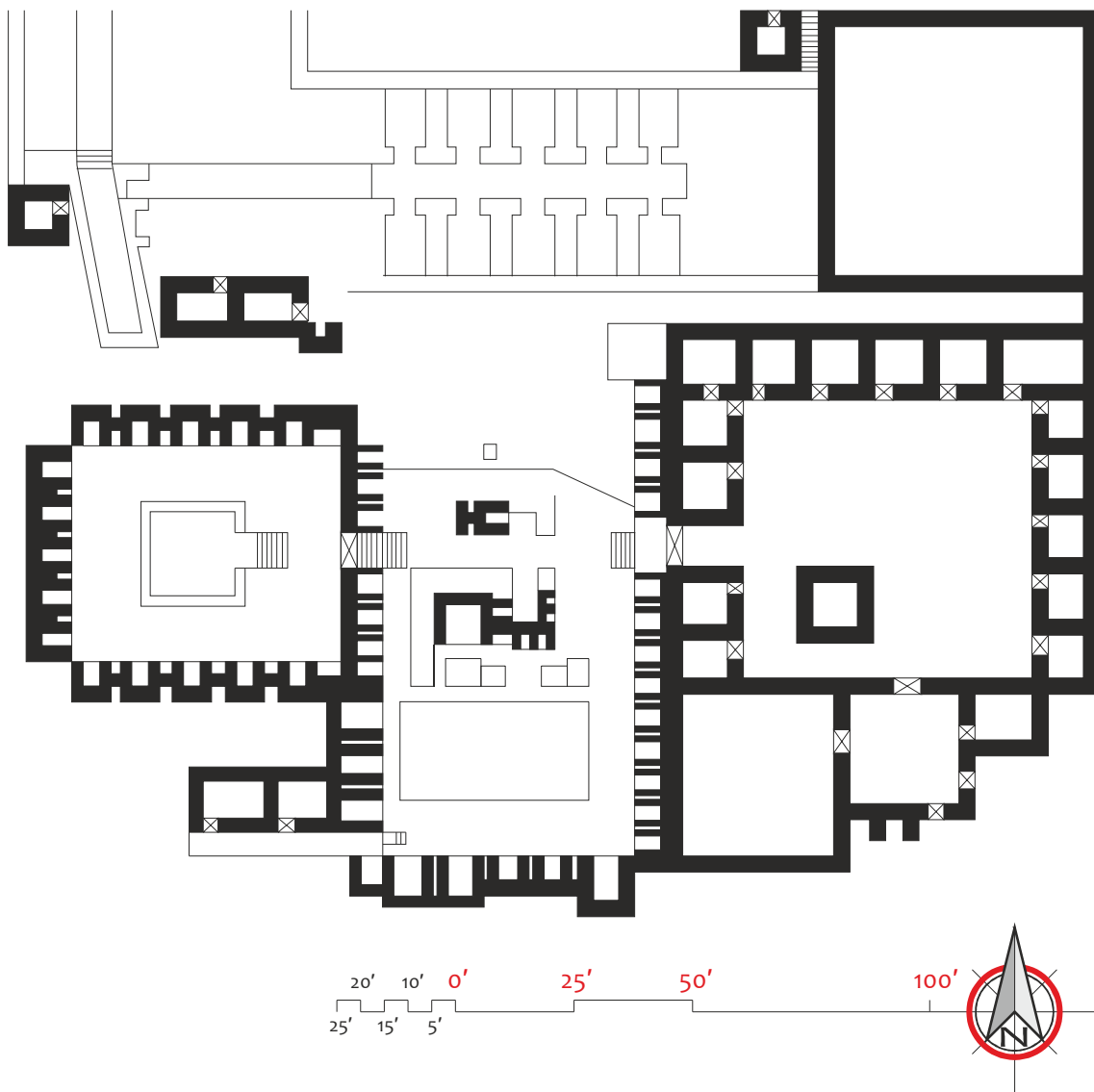
Monastery at Jaulian near Taxila

Source : Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh

**LOCATED AT**  
Takht-i-Bāhī vihāra complex,  
Taxila, Punjab,  
Pakistan.



Location



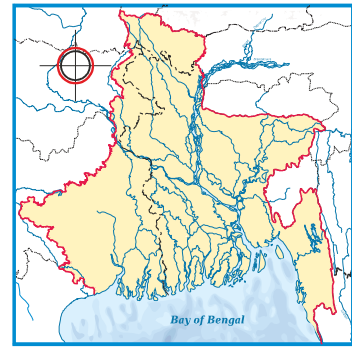
**Figure 4.2:** Takht-i-Bāhī vihāra complex, Taxila

Plan redrawn by author based on A. Cunningham's drawing

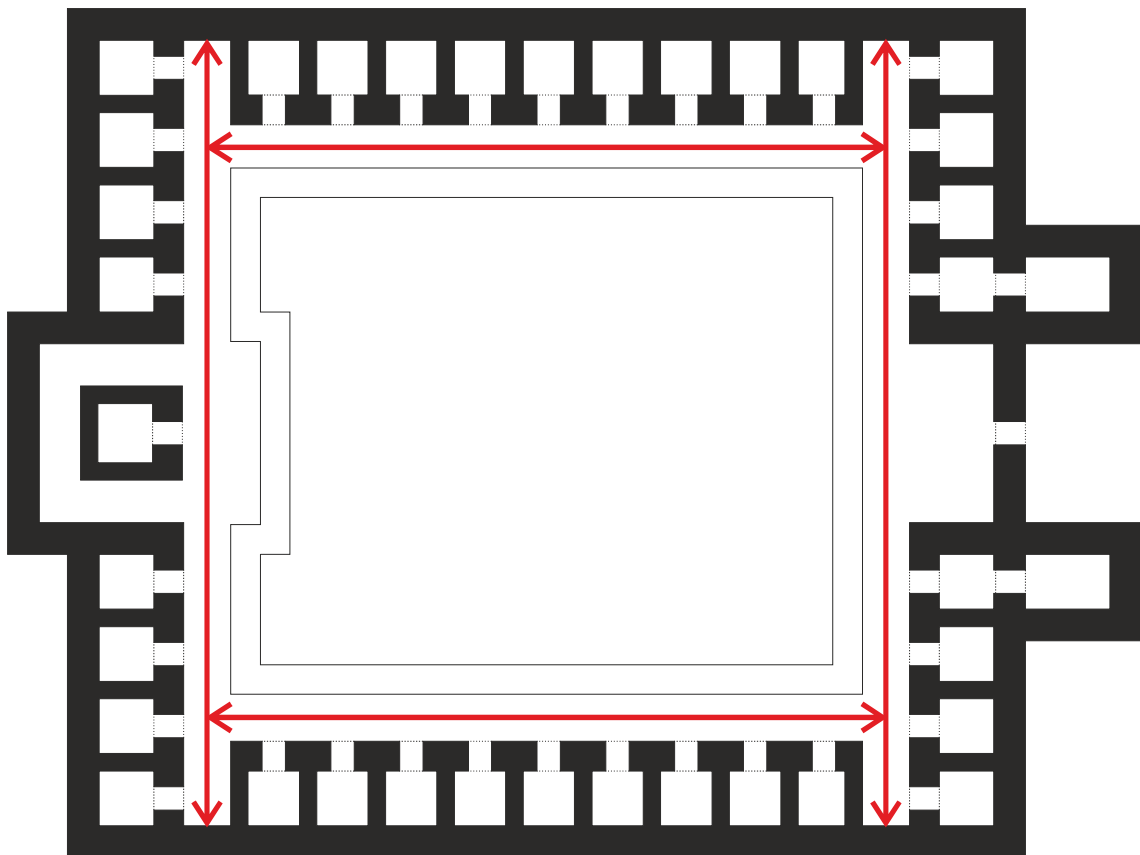
Source : Archaeological Survey of India, 1872-73: Plate VII



**LOCATED AT**  
Nalanda  
District Nalanda  
Bihar, India



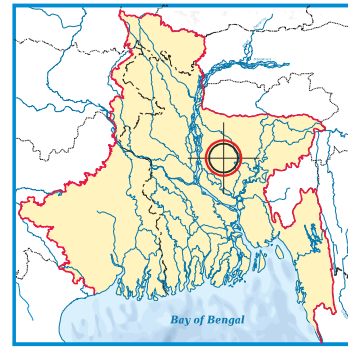
**Location**



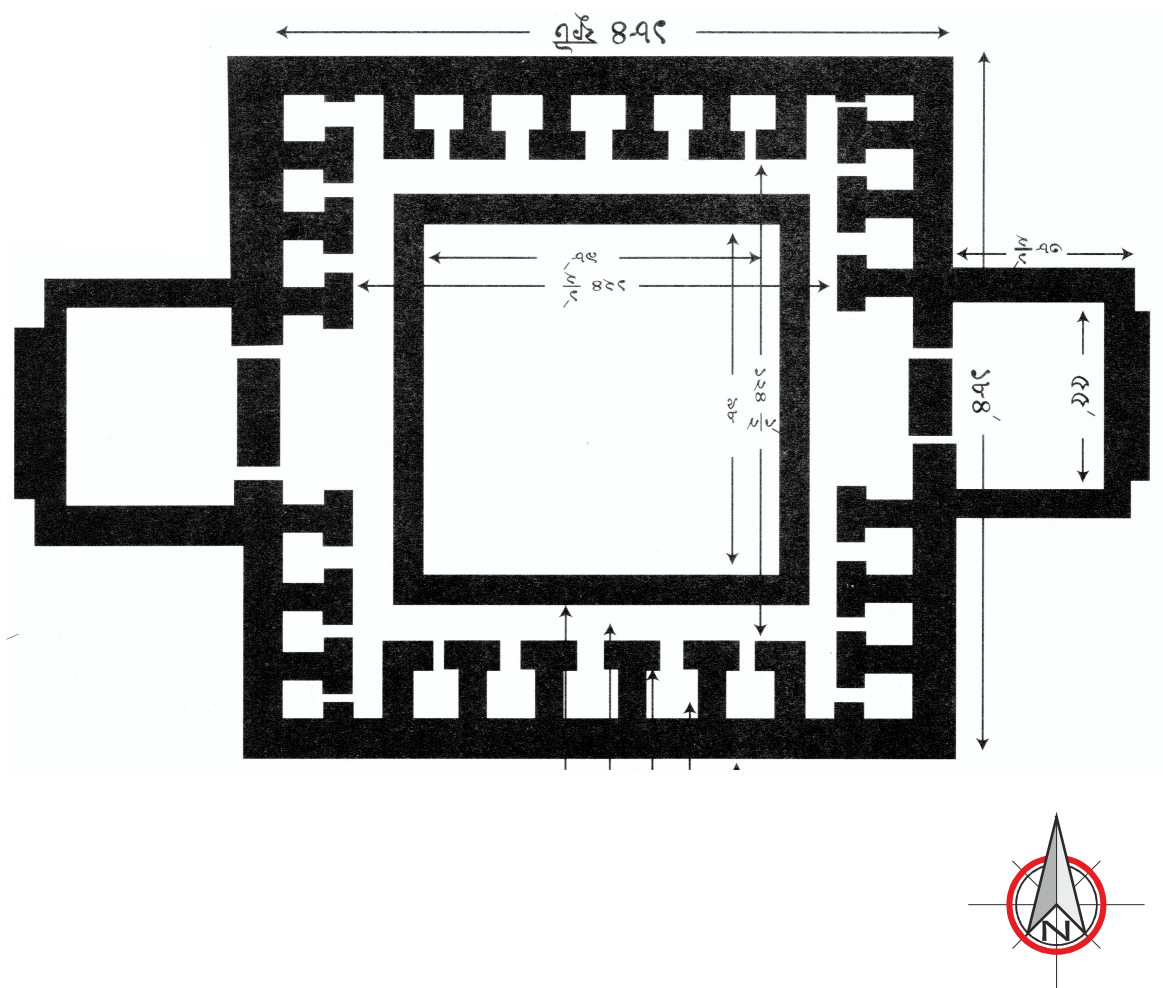
**Figure 4.3:** Gupta vihāra H-shaped

*Nalanda vihāra* monastery no 6  
Ground plan redrawn by author based on satellite view

**LOCATED AT**  
Shahebgonj-Bogdaha,  
Gaibandha,  
Bangladesh

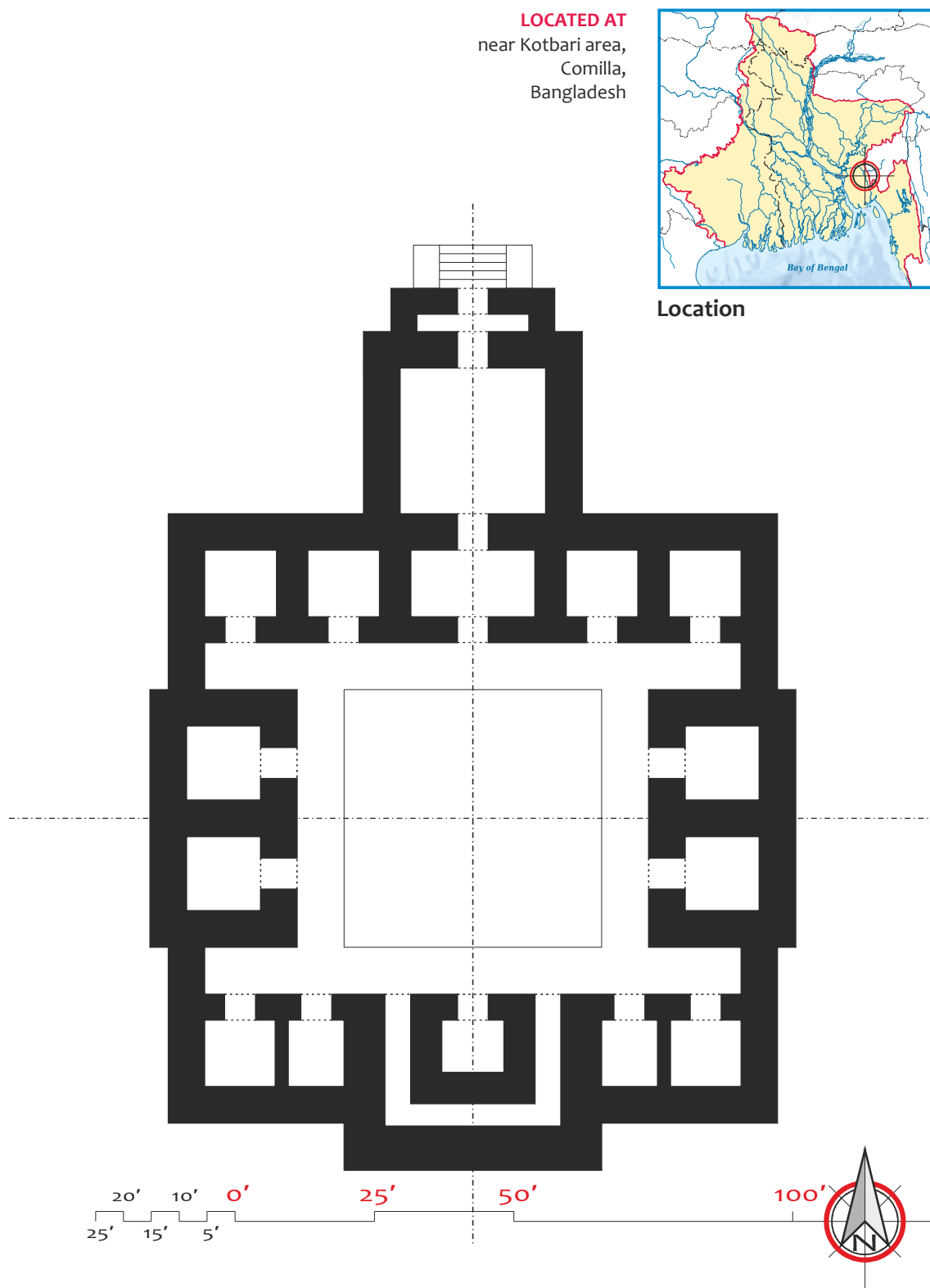


**Location**



**Figure 4.4:** Mer vihāra, Shahebgonj-Bogdaha, Gaibandha

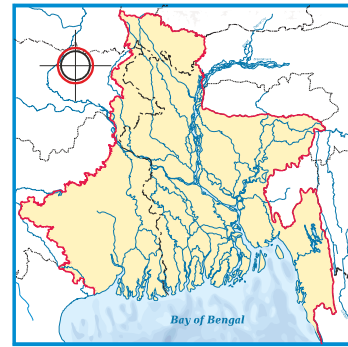
Showing Ground Plan drawn by Zakaria (Zakaria, AKM. 2007: Page-168)



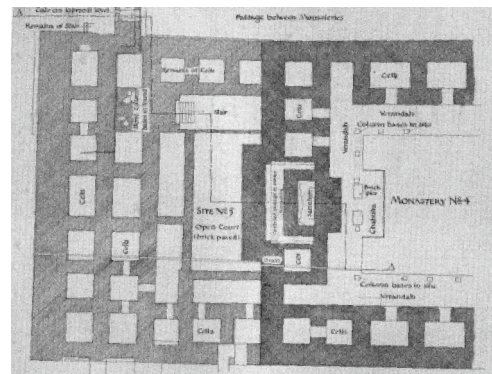
**Figure 4.5:** Central shrine of Ānanda vihāra Phase 4

Ground plan redrawn by author based on Shafiquel Alam et al.'s drawing (Alam MS, Rahman MM, Sadekuzzaman M, et al. 2008: drawing- 3.5)

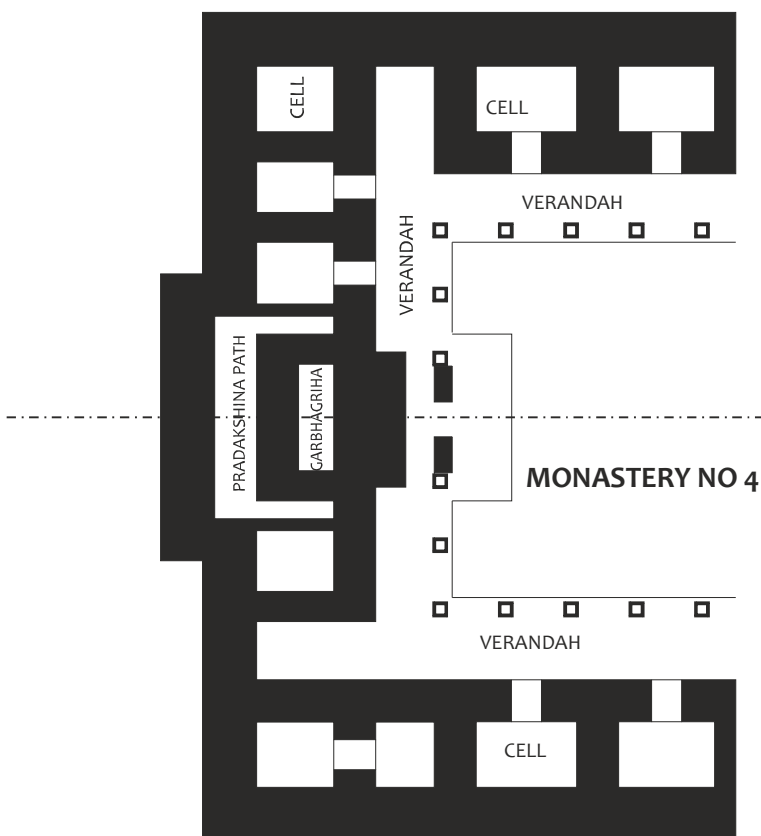
**LOCATED AT**  
Nalanda  
District Nalanda  
Bihar, India



**Location**



**Figure 4.4(a)**

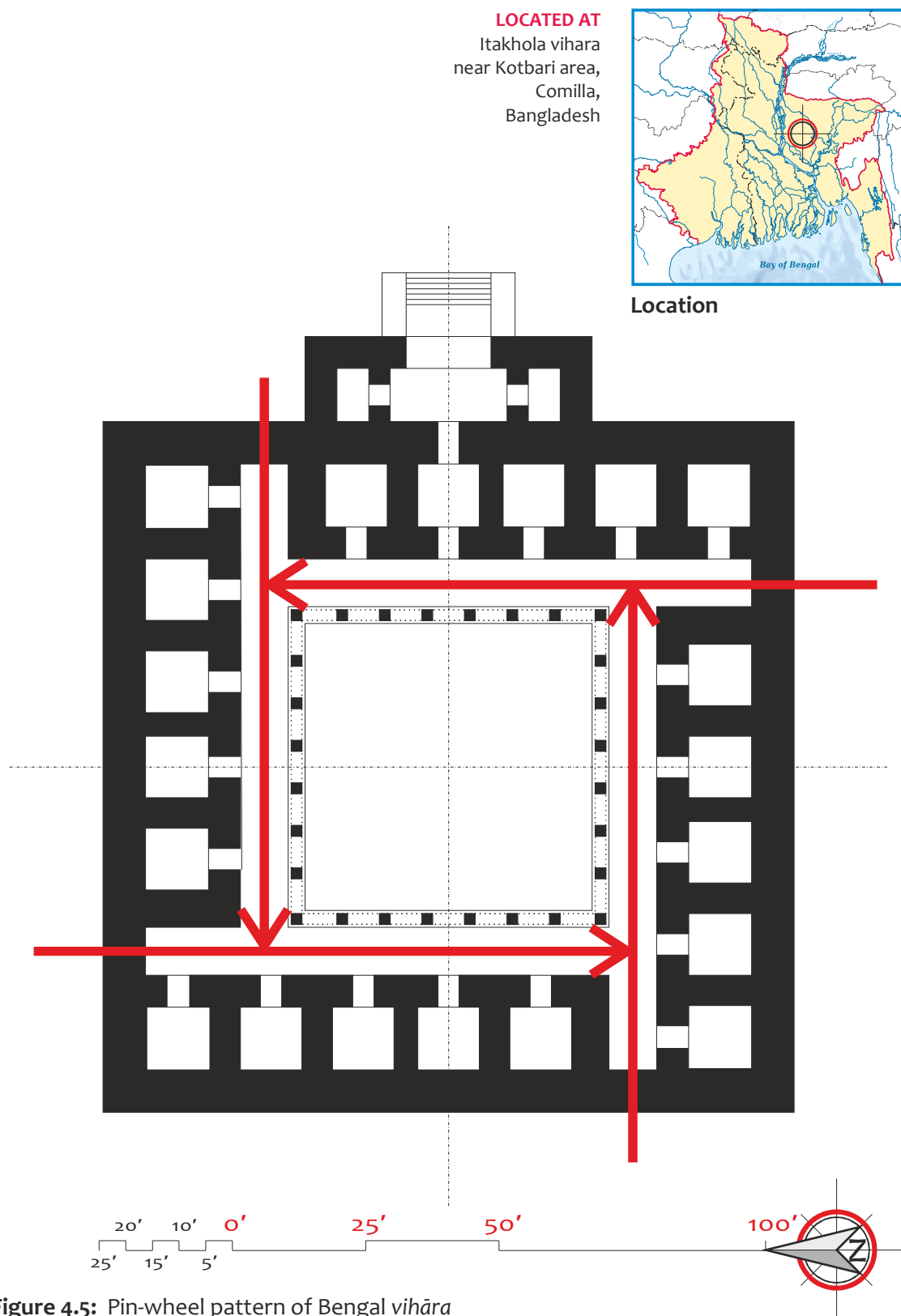


**Figure 4.6(b)**

**Figure 4.6:** *Nālandā mahāvihāra (Vihāra no 4)*

**Figure 4.6(a):** Ground plan of site 3 showing *vihāra* 4 reconstructed over *vihāra* 3, Source: ASI

**Figure 4.6(b):** Ground plan redrawn by author



**Figure 4.5:** Pin-wheel pattern of Bengal *vihāra*

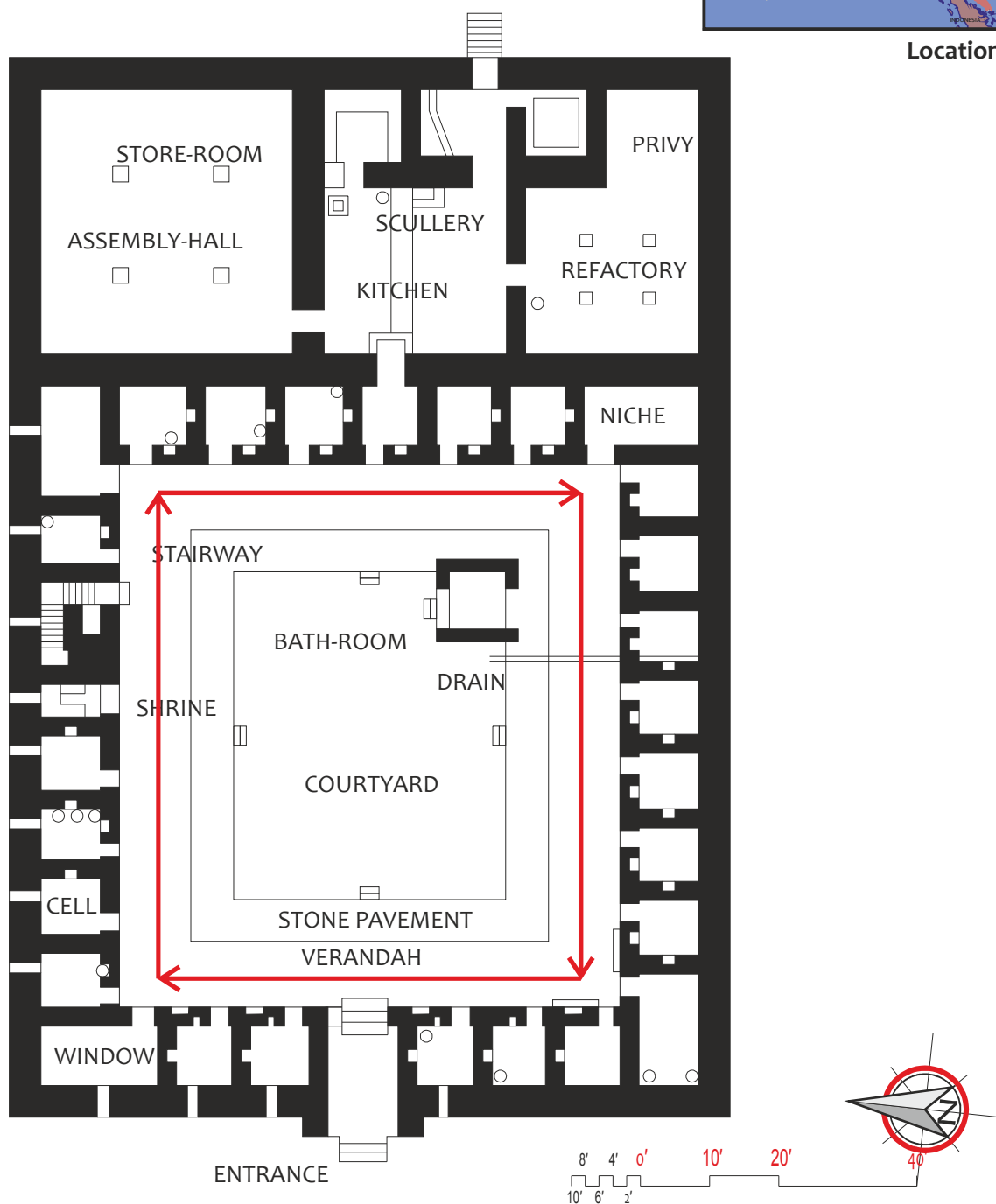
Conjectural architectural plan of Itākhola *vihāra* (Phase 1)

Drawn by: author, based on Habibur Rahman's drawing (Rahman, H. 1997: Fig-4)

**LOCATED AT**  
Julian monastery,  
near Taxila,  
Punjab, Pakistan.



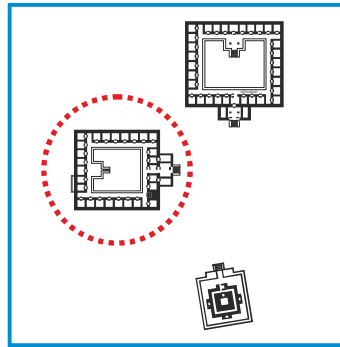
**Location**



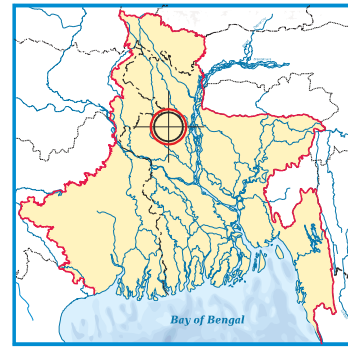
**Figure 4.8:** Monastery at Jaulian near Taxila

**Source :** Archeological Survey of India

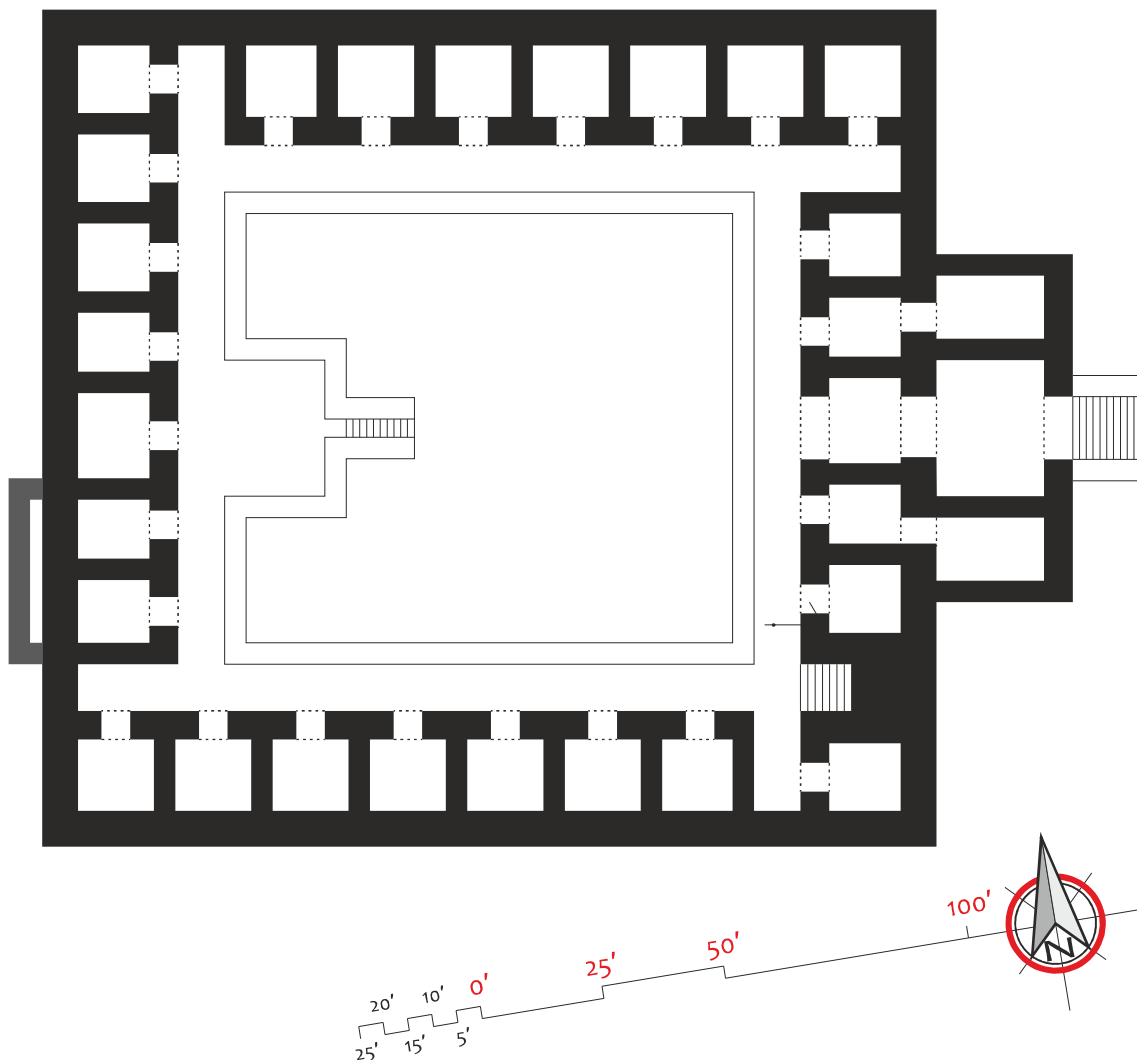
**LOCATED AT**  
 Bihar union of Shibganj thana  
 6 km west of mahasthangarh,  
 Bogra district,  
 Bangladesh



**Bhāsu vihāra complex plan**



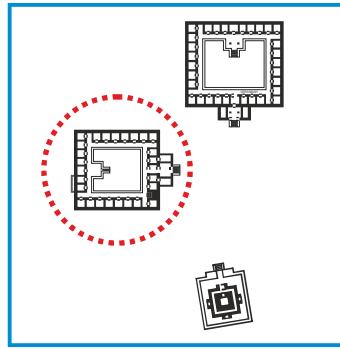
**Location**



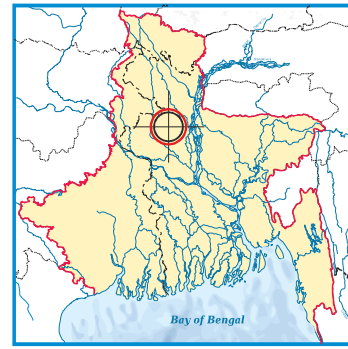
**Figure 4.9: Bhāsu vihāra monastery 1**

Ground plan redrawn by author based on Enamul Haque's drawing (Haque E. 2007 : plate-190)

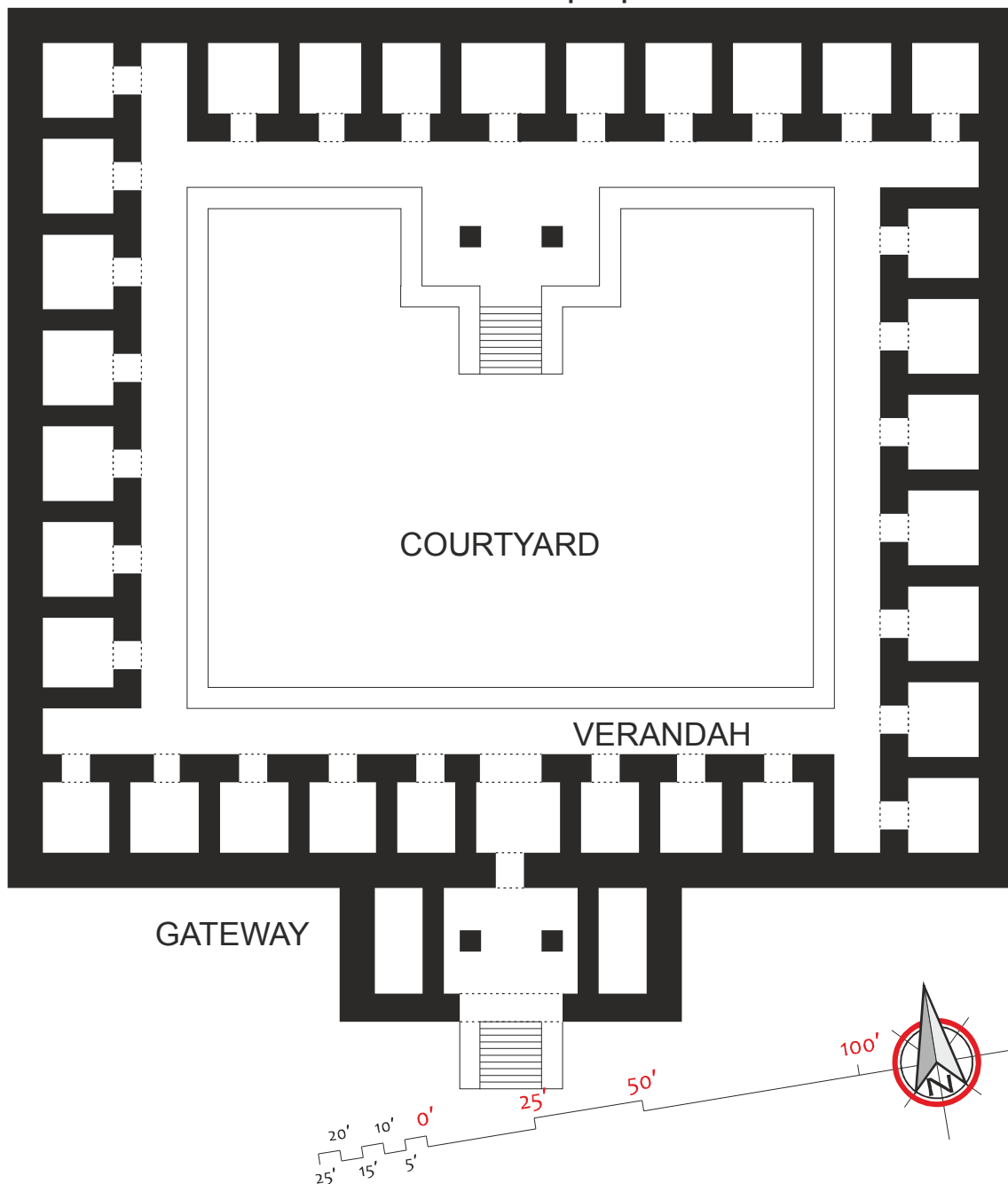
**LOCATED AT**  
 Bihar union of Shibganj thana  
 6 km west of mahasthangarh,  
 Bogra district,  
 Bangladesh



**Bhāsu vihāra complex plan**



**Location**

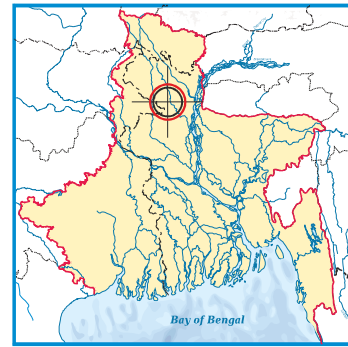


**Figure 4.10: Bhāsu vihāra monastery 2**

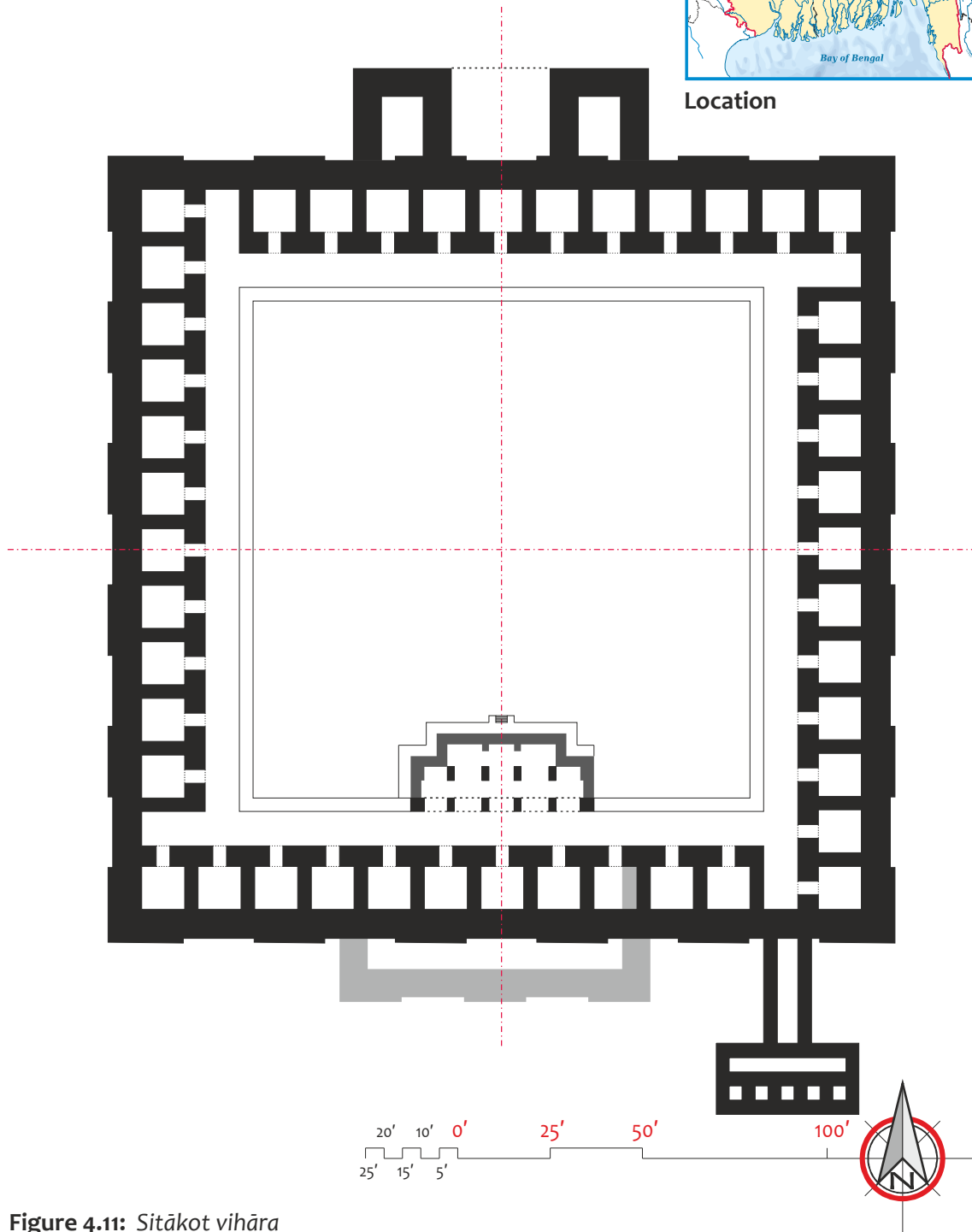
Ground plan redrawn by author based on Enamul Haque's drawing (Haque E. 2007 : plate-190)



**LOCATED AT**  
 Sitakot vihara  
 Nawabgonj  
 Dinajpur  
 Bangladesh



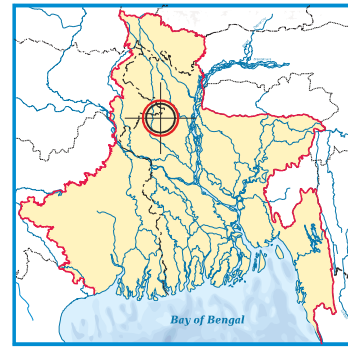
Location



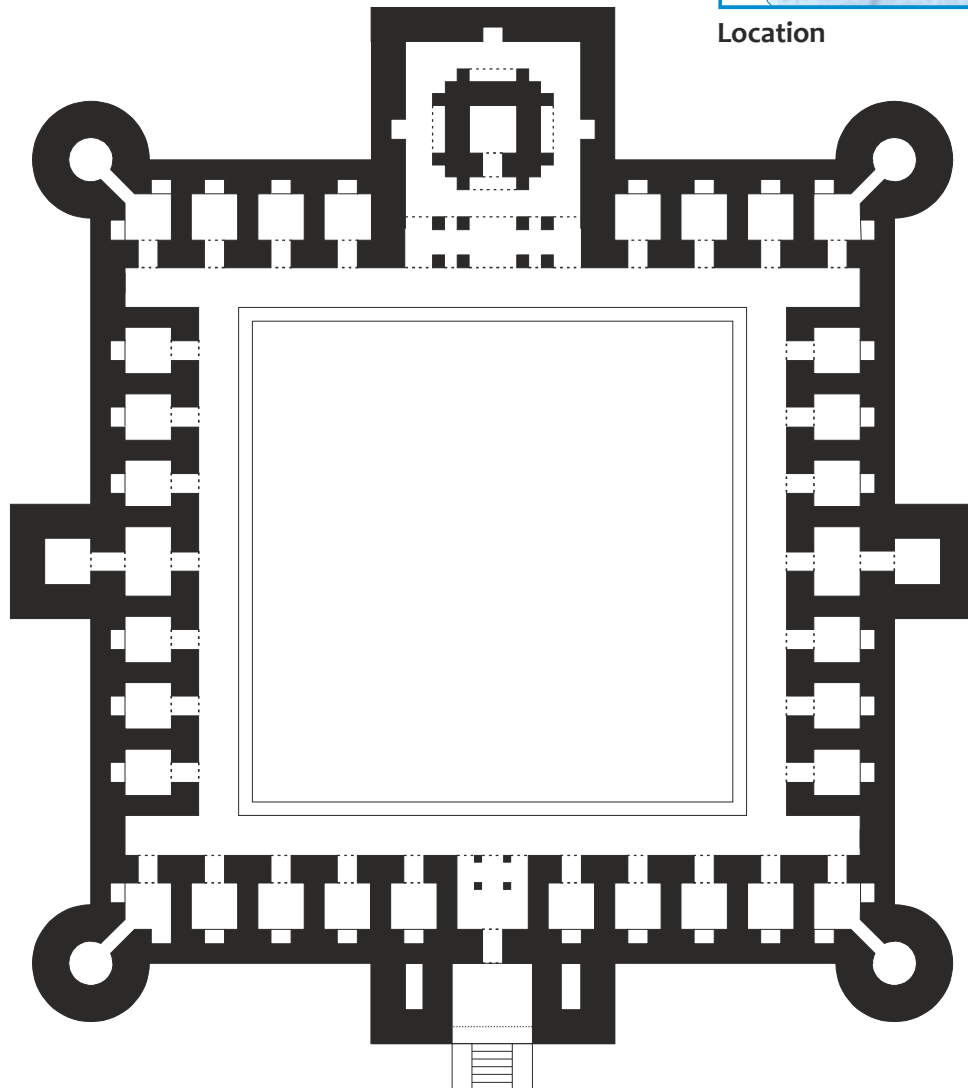
**Figure 4.11:** *Sitākot vihāra*

Ground plan redrawn by author based on archaeological drawing by Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh

**LOCATED AT**  
Dhamoirhat  
Naogaon  
Bangladesh



Location



20' 10' 0' 25' 50' 100'  
25' 15' 5'



**Figure 4.12:** *Jagaddāla vihāra*

Ground plan redrawn by author based on archaeological drawing by Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh

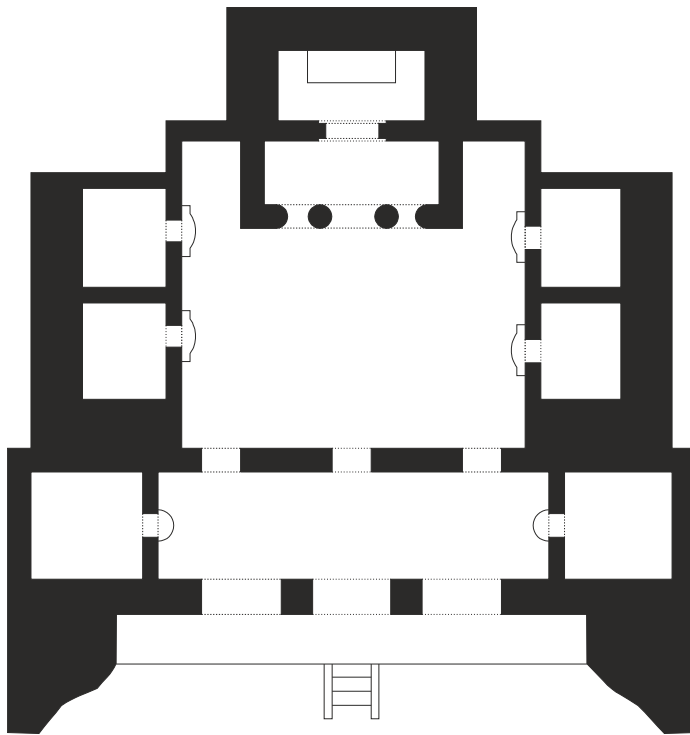


Figure 4.13(a)



#### Location

##### LOCATED AT

Near Jalgaon,  
Just outside the village of Ajintha  
Aurangabad,  
Maharashtra, India  
(20°31'56"N 75°44'44"E)



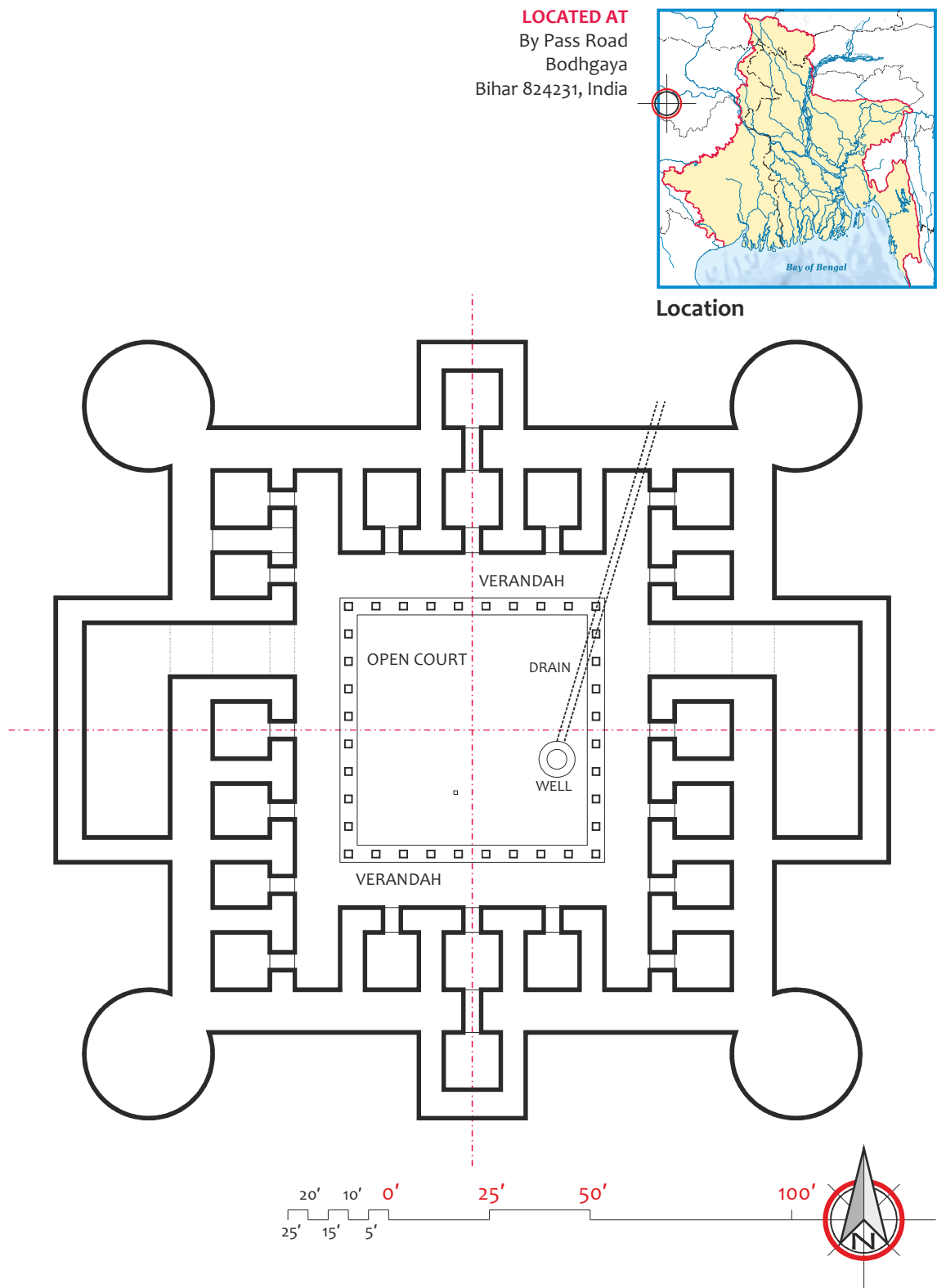
Figure 4.13(b)

#### Figure 4.13: Ajanta cave *vihāra* (*Vihāra* no 20)

Figure 4.13(a): Ground plan redrawn by author based on drawings of Capt. R. Gill, dated c.1850.

Source: [www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu)

Figure 4.13(b): View of Ajanta cave *vihāra* interior showing mandapa



**Figure 4.14:** *Mahābodhi vihāra*

Ground plan redrawn by author based on Cunningham's drawing (Cunningham, A. 1892: plate- XX)

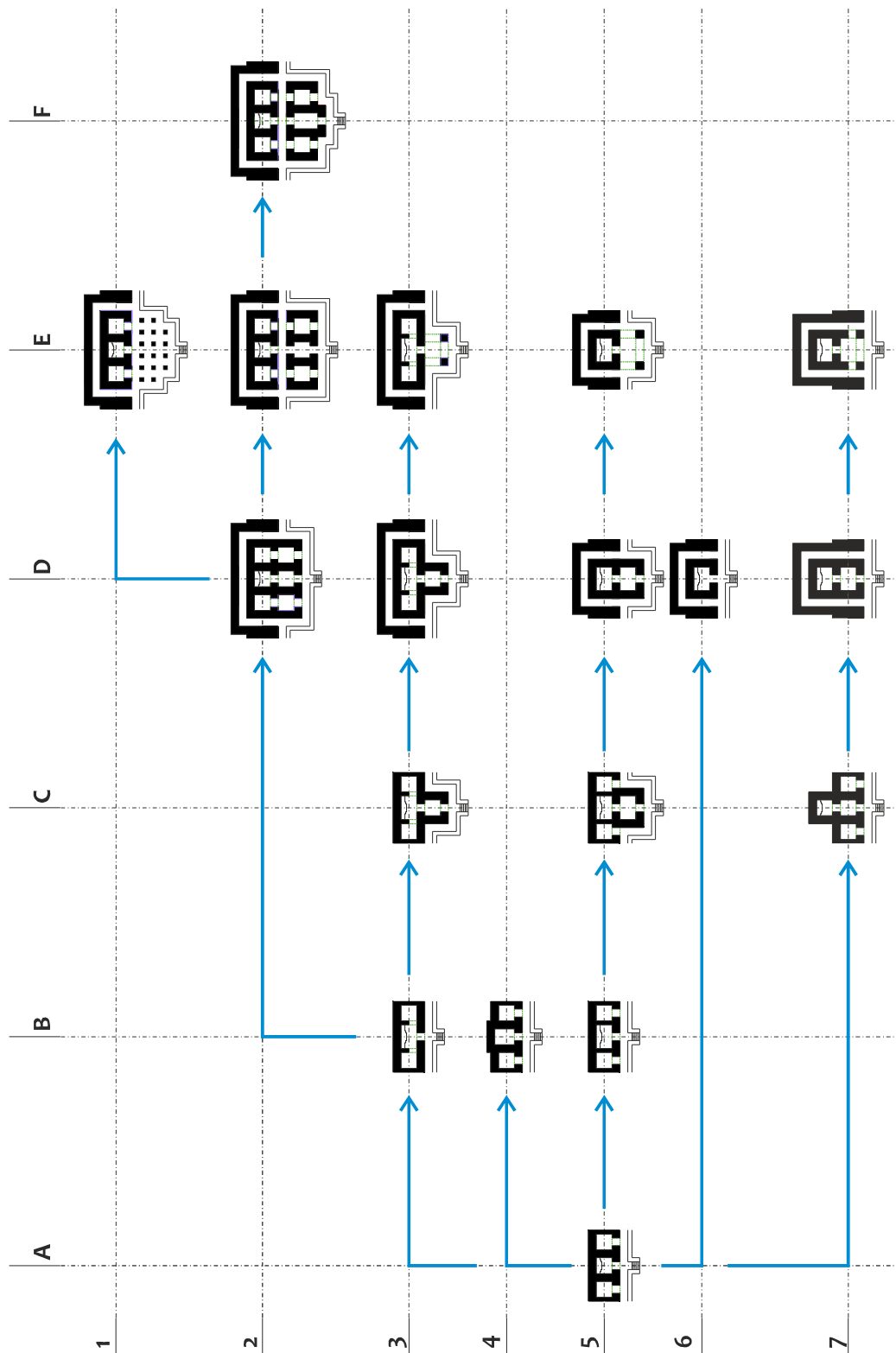


Figure 4.15: Vihāra development (wing shrine)

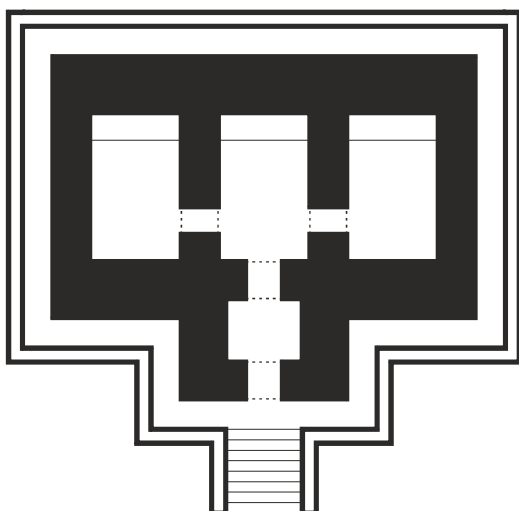
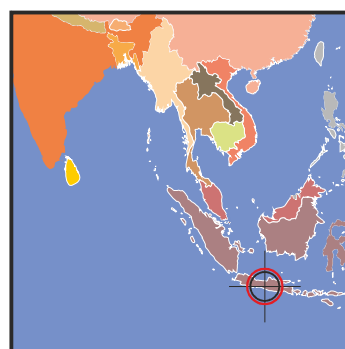


Figure 4.16(a)



#### Location

**LOCATED AT**  
Bugisan village,  
Prambanan district,  
Central Java, Indonesia



Figure 4.16(b)

#### Figure 4.16: Candi Plaosan, Java

Figure 4.16(a): Ground plan

Figure 4.13(b): View of Candi Plaosan

Source: [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)





Figure 4.17(a)



Figure 4.17(b)



Figure 4.17(c)

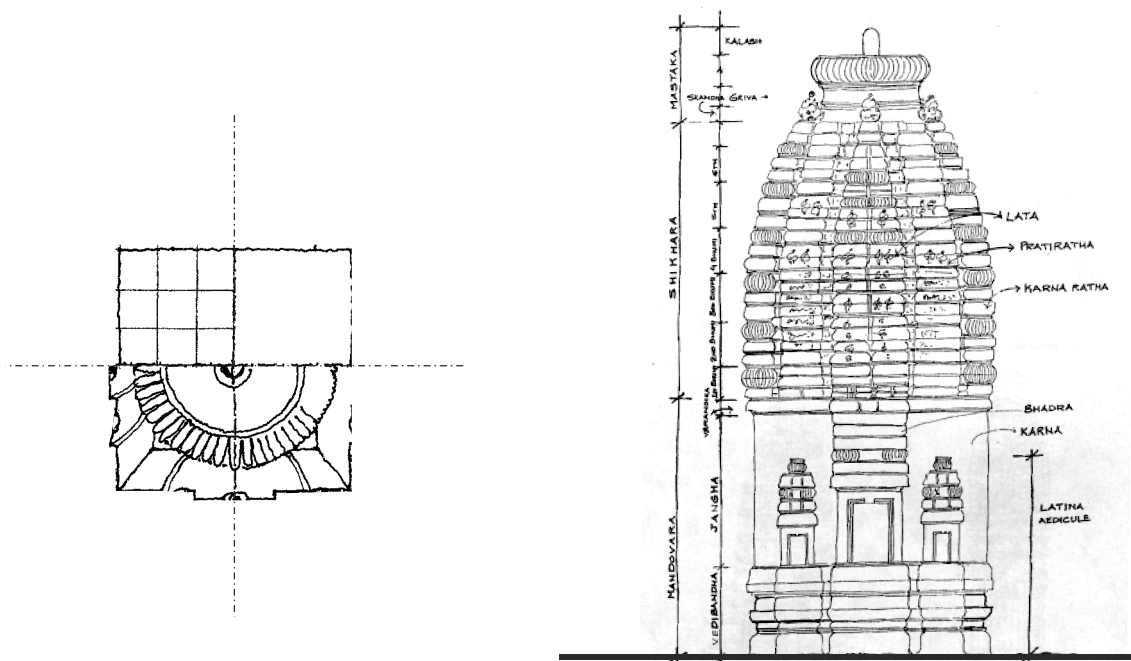
#### Figure 4.17: Use of stone in Bengal *vihāra*

Figure 4.17(a): Stone columns

Figure 4.17(b): Stone door seal

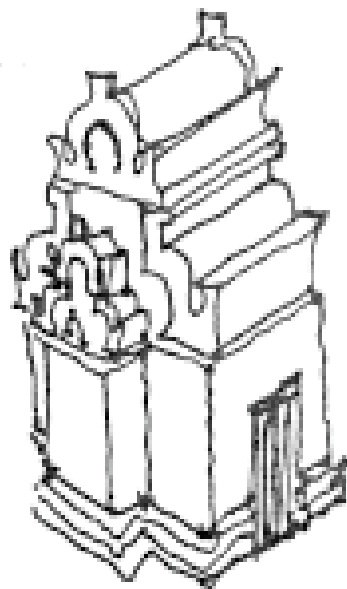
Figure 4.17 (c) : Stone details

all from *Jagaddāla vihāra* **Source:** Collected photos



**Figure 4.18:** *Latina shrine*

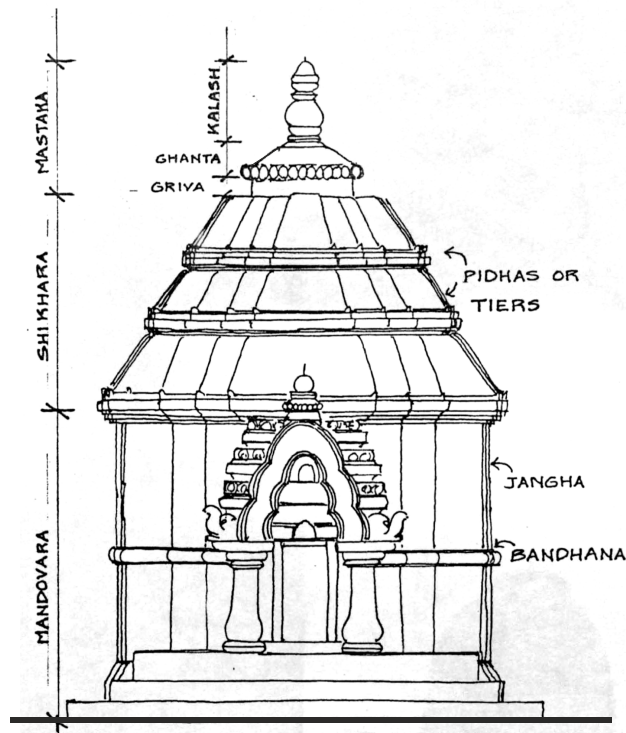
Elevation drawn by Adam Hardy (Khare A. 2004: drg- 3-A)



**Figure 4.19:** *Valabhī shrine*

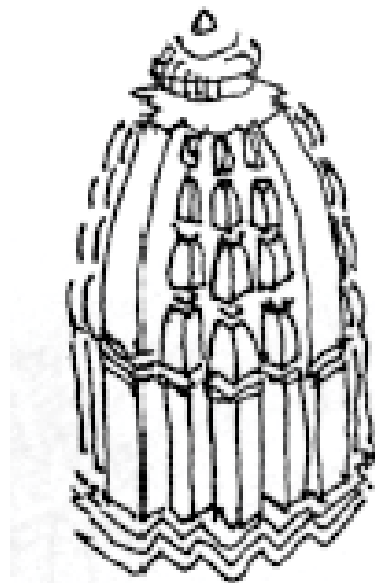
Isometric drawn by Adam Hardy (Khare A. 2004: drg- 3-A)





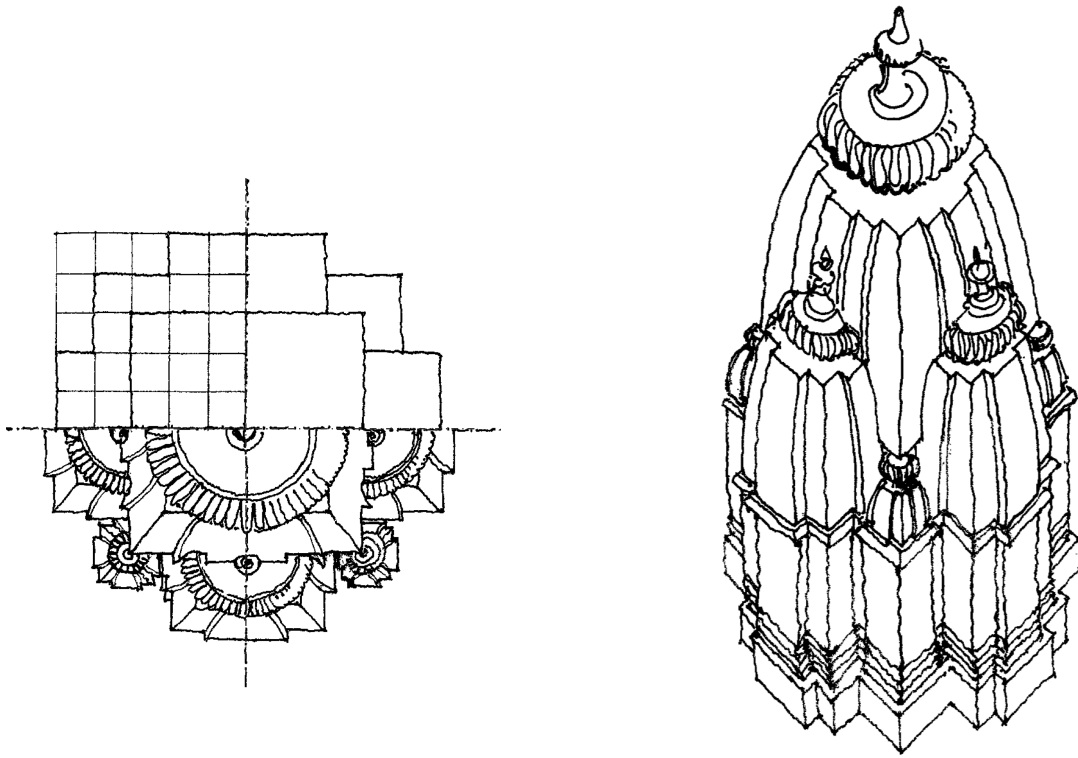
**Figure 4.20:** *Phāmsanā shrine*

Elevation drawn by Ajay Khare (Khare A. 2004: drg- 3.5)



**Figure 4.21:** *Bhūmija shrine*

Isometric drawn by Adam Hardy (Khare A. 2004: drg- 3-A)



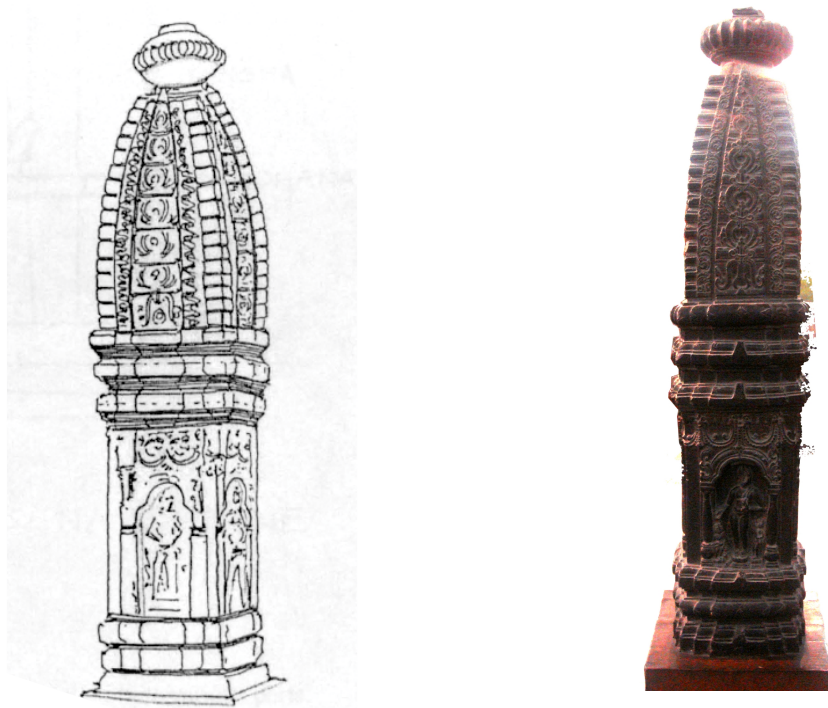
**Figure 4.22:** *Śikhari shrine*

Isometric and concept plan, drawn by Adam Hardy (Khare A. 2004: drg- 3-A)



**Figure 4.23:** *Secondary aedicule of Valabhī mode*

Isometric drawn by Adam Hardy (Khare A. 2004: drg- 3-A)



**Figure 4.24:** *Bangarh votive*

Drawn by Ajay Khare (Khare A. 2004: drg- 3.3)



**Figure 4.25:** *Jhewari votive*

Drawn by Ajay Khare (Khare A. 2004: drg- 3.4)

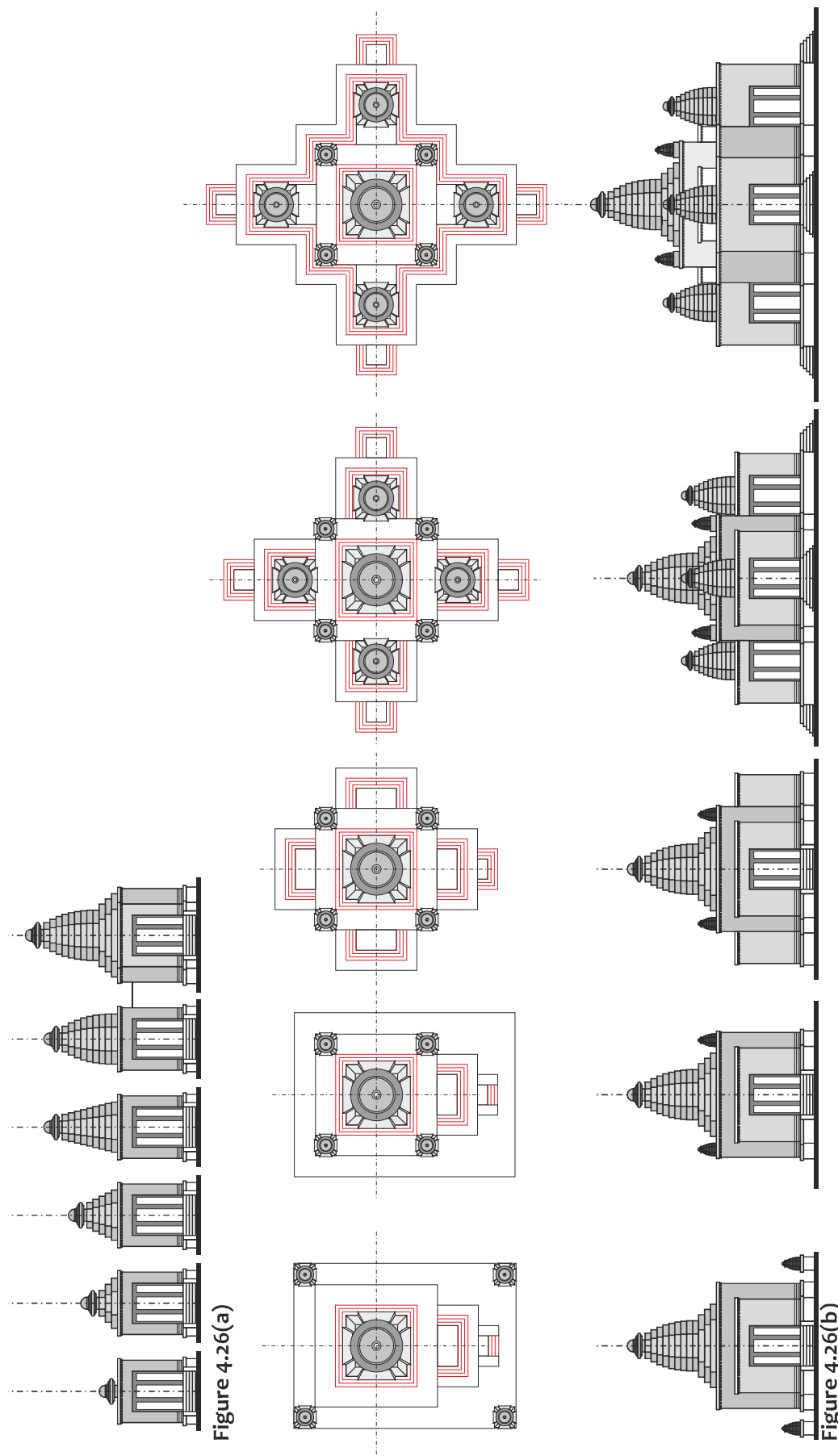


Figure 4.26(a)

Figure 4.26(b)

Figure 4.26: Śikhara development in Bengal

Figure 4.26(a): Śikhara development towards Śikhara-śirsha-bhadra (from Gupta flat to Śikhara-śirsha-bhadra)

Figure 4.26(b): Development of super structure in Bengal (From Panchayana to Cruciform)





**Figure 4.27:** *Stone Image of Manjuvajara*

Source: Art Heritage of Bangladesh (Haque, E. 2007: Plate-137)

Main shrine or the central shrine of any *vihāra* acts as a focus of all religious activities. In case of Bengal *vihāra* this Cruciform shape central shrine takes extra attention from any scholars. As many earlier examples already excavated from Bengal, no cruciform shrine was explored at *Nālandā* and its high influence identified from Near East to Far East, it is commonly believe that this type was evolved in Bengal as a unique style. This section will examine evolution of cruciform shrine. The method is twofold: First, as there is no surviving superstructure, superstructures have to virtually reconstruct. To do this it is essential to determine the form of early Buddhist architecture especially during the Gupta which can be achieve through re-examine the earliest examples and compare these with the connecting regions in form of architectural trend. The mature form, *vihāra* build during the *Pāla*, has to virtually reconstruct through proper understanding on the development pattern. In this process critical point such as when cruciform shrine begins has to identity.

Second, once the Gupta superstructure, the evolution process and the finished product of *Pāla* superstructure have been determined; the style of these architectures must be examined. The architectural order of these superstructures must be classified according to north Indian tradition.

## 5.1 Early shrines of Bengal

Today all medieval Buddhist religious structure of Bengal are in ruins even some of these await excavation that is why research carried out about these structures done mainly on methodological perspective of archaeology. Physical conditions of these structures make it hard to perceive their architectural characteristics, though archaeological researches revealed a lot of information concerning the material aspect as well as history of many structures. This information's are the base for further architectural interpretation that is the formal and spatial analysis of the archaeological findings.

In last two decades some researches have done on interpretation of archaeological findings by archaeologist, historians, art historians and architects; that provides valuable architectural analysis of these structures. Missing superstructure of the central cruciform mound of *Pabārpur vibhāra* draws attention of most scholars as this is the most preserved ruined in Bengal. This orientation gives some virtual reconstructions for the central structure of *Pabārpur vibhāra* where in most case the development of *vibhāra* structure in Bengal as a whole, especially development of central shrine was ignored.

Recent archaeological excavations and analysis gives more specific perception on architectural pattern of these central structures. New ideas about dating of some *vibhāra* structures along with period wise archaeological plans provide indication base to further think about the development of structures as a whole. Archaeological analysis clearly shows existence and development of cruciform and oblong shaped Buddhist shrine during medieval period. Moreover existence of cruciform structure in lower level proves oblong shape structure developed later from the cruciform structure. Even these findings do not provide a clear idea regarding the origin of cruciform structure.

Gupta period remains from *Lauriā Nandangaṛh* (Figure 5-1) and *Bharat Bhayna* (Figure 5-2) confirm that cruciform structure is not a sudden development in the Buddhist architecture of north eastern

India. Both remain contains a cruciform layout though none had a sign of cruciform shrine structure rather a *Stūpa* development. During the Gupta period Buddhist temples of Bihar and other parts of India, except Bengal, where Gupta reigned had square or oblong layout and cruciform shaped temple or shrine structure were absent. Whereas archaeological and literary evidences confirm existence of cruciform shrine in many *viḥāras* of *Samatāṭa*, *Gouda* and *Vareṇdra* which is a sign that it was a common trend of Bengal during the Gupta and later period. Detailed and matured form of *Pabārpur* (*Somapura*), *Vikramsilā* and *Odantpuri viḥāras* provide a clear suggestion that this trend takes a mature shape during the Pala Empire. Now it raises the question how and when the cruciform shrine developed from the square layout. To address this question comparatively older cruciform structures *Nandangaṛh* and *Bharat Bhayna*, though they do not contain any cruciform shrine, have to examine thoroughly.

Archaeological excavation explored a huge monument at *Nandangaṛh*<sup>1</sup> with five construction phases. During its fourth construction phase (early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD) this monuments was crowned by a *stūpa* at the centre of its highest terrace. The building consisted of seven concentric stories which is a well-known symbolical representation of *yantra* or the cosmic world-mountain representing different stages of consciousness (Leeuw, 1956: 287). This type of structure, *stūpa* over a concentric storied basement, was a popular example in the Buddhist world that time. Earliest phase of *Nandangaṛh*, when it was a small flat dome *stūpa*, resembles most closely the shape of the great *stūpa* at *Sāñchī* and the *Dharmarajikā stūpa* at Taxila which suggest its construction date as early as 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Largeness of its fourth phase as well as being used so long suggests its importance in Buddhist world and that could be used as a model for that time.

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<sup>1</sup> Nandangaṛh is an enormous mound about half a mile to the south-west of *Lauṛiā*, North *Bihār*. Cunningham gave the site name as *Lauṛiā-Nandangaṛh*, though present day it is popular as Nandangaṛh.



*Harish Chandra Rājār Dhibī*<sup>2</sup> contains similar type of structure in a miniature form (Figure 5-3). This 38.57 m square two terraced *stūpa* of 5-6<sup>th</sup> century had a solid 26.37 m square *stūpa* base with offsets on all sides. There also have a sign to further addition of an offset at second phase (Haque, 2007). But this disturbed site does not give any more information regarding the super structure or *stūpa*.

In case of *Bharat Bhayna*, though it is not as large as *Nandangarh* and also different on layout except in principle the cruciform form have some similarities. Archaeological layout of *Bharat Bhayna* suggest concentric platform while it does not gives any proposal about the top superstructure (Figure 5-2). Excavations have exposed the remains of whose superstructure seems to have been completely destroyed. After first excavation<sup>3</sup> Alam described this remains as a cruciform shape foundation or high podium of an imposing superstructure that does not exist now. That high podium consists of a series of blind cells of various sizes and shapes. The main building, if any either a shrine or a *stūpa*, was built 11.88m above the ground level on a solid foundation gradually raised by means of a number of cross walls of various dimensions and oriented in different directions forming a cellular structure. The intervening spaces of the cross walls were compacted by earth filling resulting in a series of blind cells (Alam, 1989).

After the second excavation<sup>4</sup>, when partial wings been exposed and eastern portion takes a cruciform shape, Musa made a comparative analysis of *Bharat Bhayna* with other Bengal *vihāra* structures and strongly gave his opinion as *Bharat Bhayna* can be considered the earliest one of the cruciform temple and later this type of shrine were built at *Maināmati* hill range where it grew as a central of attention of Buddhist people (Musa, 1999). This idea clearly expresses two key points; firstly, cruciform shrine was first seen on *Bharat Bhayna* based on archaeological dating and Secondly development of cruciform shrine was happen in the *Samatāṭa* region as many cruciform

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<sup>2</sup> a heavily disturbed ancient archaeological site of Savar, Dhaka

<sup>3</sup> First regular excavation have done during 1985-86

<sup>4</sup> Second regular excavation conducted during the session 1995-96 and 1996-1997

exist in this region. When this was written, excavations at *Bharat Bhayna* had only partially done and the exact shape of the structure was not known. Since then, however, the excavations have given us the layout of the structure which is clearly related to that of some of the shrine structure of south eastern Bengal. That might have influence Musa to make his concluding opinion as *Bharat Bhayna* the origin of the cruciform shrine of Bengal.

But recent archaeological excavation<sup>5</sup> (Ali, 2000) gives a clear ground plan of the *Bharat Bhayna* mound. It appears that the principal cell of the main building was built over the massive square central block of the cellular structure, located in the middle of the mound. The central block externally measures 11.30 x 11.30m and consists of four blind cells built by very thick walls (2.80m) in comparison to other parts of the cellular foundation. Around this central block three more rows of blind cells were accommodated which gives a rectangular shape. This large rectangular block measures 47.10m E-W and 42.10m N-S. In the middle of each side of the rectangular block of blind cells a projected arm was provided. This gave the rectangular block a somewhat cruciform shape. A 3m wide circumambulatory passage ran parallel to this cruciform structure at its base (Alam, 2008).

Above mentioned distinguished rectangular shape of the main block makes *Bharat Bhayna* quite different from the previous two; *Nandangaṛh* and *Harish Chandra Rājār Dhībī stūpa*, both contains a square platform. Whereas in Bengal any known cruciform shrine does not contains a rectangular main block before the projected arm and from this point it is not justifiable to say *Bharat Bhayna* can be considered the origin of the cruciform temple only from the cruciform ground layout as we see cruciform layout previously at *Nandangaṛh*. In addition, though *Harish Chandra Rājār Dhībī* does not contain any arm to give a cruciform footprint, there were sign of trend on the offset of its terrace structure. Probably this trend is not new to Buddhist architecture as this kind of

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<sup>5</sup> Exact excavation date cannot be identified; this drawing was collected from the Department of Archaeology Bangladesh.

development can be found as early as 4<sup>th</sup> century BC at the Great *stūpa* of *Sāñchi* (Figure 5-4) where entry approaches were from four cardinal points.

Now these raise the question why the main block of *Bharat Bhayna* is rectangular and makes it different than other cruciform Buddhist shrine of Bengal. What were its antecedents and when was that? At the same time, it brings in front another important question put forwarded by archaeologist Akbar<sup>6</sup>, “*is this really a Buddhist structure?*” Archaeological layout of *Bharat Bhayna* is quite different from other cruciform shaped shrine of Bengal and their different construction phase in point of architectural pattern, except the peripheral cruciform shape. As the ruins are not well enough to provide clear information about the superstructure, it is difficult to analysis the characteristics of its architectural style solely from the archaeological evidence of that particular period. That is why to find answer of these questions have to rationally think how the super structure was on that particular archaeological layout, which can be identify with the help of architectural trend of that time at Bengal and other parts of north eastern India. Excavated sites with rectangular main block, similar as *Bharat Bhayna*, could provide further information about the architectural trend.

Recently excavated site *Damdā Pireṣṭhan Dhībī* have similarity with *Bharat Bhayna* in point of rectangular main block and concentric terraces, except it got only one arm. This site is situated at Monirampur of Jessore which is in the same district where *Bharat Bhayna* also situated. The Department of Archaeology of Bangladesh started excavation of this mound in 2004-5. During 2007-08 seasons the excavations have completely exposed the remains of a building whose superstructure seems to been completely destroyed. Without the arm the large central rectangular block measures 22.45 m E-W and 21.50 m N-S which is almost a square like *Bharat Bhayna*.

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<sup>6</sup> Archaeologist Shihabuddin Md Akbar, Regional Director, Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh gives his opinion as it could be a Jain structure in an interview with the author.

However according to Akbar (Akbar et al., 2008) this remain was also a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century Jain temple based on a small Jain icon of *Mollinath*.

Similar type of cellular structure likewise seen at *Gokul Medh*, an excavated mound in the village of Gokul under Bogra Sadar Upazila which is about 2 kilometer southwest of *Mahāsthān* citadel, popularly known as *Lakṣiṇḍareṣ Medh* or *Behula-Lakṣiṇḍareṣ Bāsar-ghaṛ*. In early excavation<sup>7</sup> a gigantic plinth of 172 blind rectangular cells solidly packed with earth and arranged in gradually rising tiers to support a towering polygonal shrine or *stūpa* in the terraced cellular style of construction revealed. Some terracotta plaques of the late Gupta period associated with the shrine were found from this site. Based on these artefacts Khan estimate this structure was the base of a shrine or *stūpa* of 6th-7th century AD (Khan, 2008). According to Ahmed<sup>8</sup>, that type of cellular structure was a common practice around five hundred years before arrival of Muslim in Bengal (Ahmed, 1997). Based on existence of octagonal walls above the platform he further added that there was a Buddhist shrine, could be a *stūpa*, over that cruciform and multilevel platform.

Excavations in 2008-09 at *Bhāsu viḥāra* (Alam et al., 2008a) explored a rectangular Buddhist temple with three circumambulatory passages at different levels. This temple is on the south western side of well-known *Bhāsu viḥāra* and temple complex. The central block of this temple externally measures 6 x 6 m and contains a blind cells (2 x 2 m) built by very thick walls. Cellular structure like *Bharat Bhayna* identified under the circumambulatory platform. This temple is heavily damaged and only a portion of excavation have been done, at this stage it really hard to make a decision about it super structure even though it can be easily seen that there are many similarity between this temple style and *Bharat Bhayna* as well as *Damdām Pireṣthan Dhībī*.

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<sup>7</sup> Excavation work done at *Gokul Medh* in 1934-36 by NG Majumdar.

<sup>8</sup> Excavations were carried out on *Gokul Medh* from 1961 to 1968, under the direction of Nazimuddin Ahmed.

Another partly exposed remains of the fourth building of *Bihar Dhāp vihāra* at Bogra representing similar layout plan. Because of a restricted excavation (1979-1986) it is hard to reconstruct the complete layout plan though it clearly shows the massive podium of an imposing structure which does not survive now (Alam et al., 2000). The superstructure was built at a higher level above the ground on a cellular structure as seen at *Gokul Medh*, which is only 6 kilometer from the site, and *Bharat Bhayna* of Jessore (Zakariah, 2007). It appears that the sanctum of the superstructure was built over the massive square central cell of the cellular structure. Two rows of cells have been exposed in the east, west and north sides while three rows in the south suggest ambulatory layers of the central shrine. Most subsidiary cells are oblong but the corner cells are square with inward projections at the corners which are also similar as *Bharat Bhayna* and *Damdā Pireṣṭhan Dhibi*.

Another similar type temple unearthed at the site of *Karṇasuvarṇa* in Murshidabad district of West Bengal, barely has the foundations left although this foundation clearly shows a ground plan of *pañchayatana* (five shrined) temple (Das, 2008).

Above examples demonstrates a trend of rectangular temple in Bengal during the Gupta and later period, which generally contains a central square block with a cell and circumambulatory passages at different levels. Cellular structure system used to raise the platform on almost every structure where an arm of stair or ramp used to reach the platform. In few cases (such as *Bharat Bhayna* and *Gokul Medh*) four cardinal arms gives the whole structure a so called cruciform form. In this region no more antecedents been identified, except previously stated examples, of this trend from available sources. Moreover these archaeological excavation reports do not provide a clear understanding about the superstructure of these shrines except few hints. Further antecedent of this trend could give some clues to draw the ground plan whereas any example of that particular type of shrine with surviving superstructure could be used as a sample to rethink the superstructure.

The temple 1 (Principle shrine) of *Bhāsu vihāra* contains a semi cruciform shrine layout (Figure 5-5) over a rectangular platform (Haque, 2007: 179). Though lack of published material it is not certain that the platform was built over a cellular structure or not. But the ambulatory passage at different level and the central square cell proves it is also a product of the previously stated trend. It also does not have any superstructure survived to provide further information about the trend except the ground plan.

From archaeological excavation till date it is certain that Bengal does not have any surviving superstructure of that type shrine, so to find the antecedent of this trend connecting regions of Bengal could be useful sources. During the Gupta's *Nālandā*, the most important centre for the later Buddhist learning was acted as the centre of administration and Buddhist development. Historical and literary evidences clearly show connection between Bengal and *Nālandā*. That makes a possibility of existence this trend at *Nālandā* during Gupta time parallel to Bengal or as an antecedent.

At *Nālandā*, *Stūpa* site 13 (Figure 5-6) have a similar foot print of the trend previously described. It has a central square shrine block with a cell and circumambulatory passage on a raised platform. A single arm of stair from east connects the platform to the ground. But it does not give a clear idea about its four rectangular blocks on four corners. Whereas *Stūpa* site 12 (Figure 5-7) have four corner shrines on similar footprint, but in this case it contains a semi-cruciform shrine with a single cell which is probably a later development of this trend.

The best preserved monument of *Nālandā* is the great *Stūpa* of Site 3 (Figure 5-8), a structure which underwent no less than seven enlargements. The fifth of these successively-built temples is the most interesting and the best preserved. It has four corner towers, of which three have been exposed, and was decorated with rows of niches containing well-modelled stucco figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. From the inscriptions and stucco figures, which are fine specimens of Gupta art, it is possible to ascribe the fifth phase of the temple to the sixth century A.D., although

it appears that the foundation of the original structure must have been laid at least two centuries earlier. From the architectural perspective this *stūpa* can be considered as the antecedent of these two, temple 1 of *Bhāsu vibhāra* and *Stūpa* site 13 at *Nālandā*, and helps to understand their development trend.

These *Nālandā* examples gives us a clear understanding of the layout plan and to some extent, the idea about their superstructures; however, as these superstructures are not well preserved, the idea cannot be complete. Even though their *pañchayatana* character is distinguishable, this could be a symbolic representation of the five Buddhas - one in the center and four at the corners- since the *Nālandā mahāvihāra* was known as one of the chief centers of the cult of the Five Buddhas. A well preserved and developed example comparable to that style was the Lakshmana Temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh (Figure 5-9) of later period. With one exception of a very late date, most *pañchayatana* temples of north India belong to the *Nāgara* order with a cruciform plan and curvilinear *Śikhara* (Das, 2008).

Keeping in mind the trend in Bengal and its connecting regions conjectural architectural ground plan could be drawn on the basis of the archaeological layout excavated, which could give us a platform to further discuss the architectural trend and development pattern of Buddhist shrines in Bengal. Though the lack of published sources renders this process more complex, based on available data till date conjectural architectural plans (Figure 5-10 & (Figure 5-11) look fairly well defined for the shrines of *Bharat Bhayna* and *Damdām Piresthan Dhibi*. Whereas Ahmed (Ahmed, 1997) proposes a *stūpa* over the octagonal platform of *Gokul medh* for later Gupta period, which also seems plausible. According to 2006-07 excavation session at *Bihar Dhāp* (Alam *et al.*, 2008b), there was a central cell and two ambulatory passage over the cellular structure. On the other hand, excavations of a new temple at *Bhāsu vibhāra* have only partially been accomplished and its present status is too premature to make any plausible suggestions except for some identifiable similarities in trends. Superimposing Smith's proposed plan (Smith *et al.*, 2004) over the archaeological plan

of Alam (Alam *et al.*, 2008a) a conjectural architectural plan has been developed (Figure 5-12) which shows similar characters.

The above discussion makes it clear that the trend of Buddhist architecture of Bengal during the Gupta and the later period was to build the shrine over a raised platform of cellular structure, with circumambulatory passages at different levels above that platform level. Conjectural plans show that there was a central cell in most cases<sup>9</sup> but none of these shrine structures were cruciform.

This conjectural architectural ground plan of *Bharat Bhayna* (Figure 5-10) stretches the prospect of further thinking about the origin of the cruciform shrine of Bengal from an architectural perspective. It is difficult, however, to determine the complete architectural characteristics solely from the archaeological evidence of that particular period as surviving *pañchayatana* shrines of this region do not have multilevel platforms. Later evidence of *pañchayatana* examples are Hindu Vishnu temples, which probably only took the principle idea of five temple shrine<sup>10</sup> in isolation, rather than as a comprehensive practice. The adoption of Buddha as one of the *avatārs* of Vishnu<sup>11</sup> under Vaishnavism (Bhagavatism) is believed to be a catalyzing factor in the assimilation of relationships during the Gupta period (c. 319-495 AD). That is why *Mahāyāna* Buddhism is sometimes called Buddha-Bhagavatism (Hāṇḍā, 1994: 40). Later during the post-Gupta period Buddhism begins to lose its strength in *Nālandā* and Vaishnavism takes over while Bengal flourishes as a center of Buddhist architectural development. During the post-Gupta Vishnu temples developed a lot and at the end of post-Gupta they took their mature shape. That's why later *Vaiṣṇava* temples are less Buddhist and more *Vaiṣṇavite*.

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<sup>9</sup> Except the *Gokul Medh*, as it was proposed an octagonal *stūpa* by Ahmed

<sup>10</sup> *Nālandā mahāvihāra* was renowned as a place of five Buddhas. The existence of ample five temple shrines may be because five temples represent five Buddhas.

<sup>11</sup> *Daśavatāra* refers to the ten principal *avatārs* of Vishnu in Vaishnavism. During the Gupta period (AD 330-550) the Buddha was gradually adopted as the ninth *avatār* of Vishnu.



The adoption of similar models in South-East Asian Buddhist architecture can be used as a source where Buddhism continued to develop parallel to Bengal and during the downfall at *Nālandā*. The Sailendra, an influential Indonesian dynasty that emerged in eighth century Java, were active promoters of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, who covered the Central Java with Buddhist monuments including the world famous Borobudur. This is also the time when Bengal had a good connection with Java. Unlike the other Chinese Buddhist monks<sup>12</sup> I-sing / Yijing (AD 635–713) made his journey to *Nālandā* via the sea route passing through *Srivijaya* of Java and *Tāmralipti* of Bengal (Sen, 2006: 33). Voyage between these two port cities represent their direct interaction and connection. Moreover, the mention in the *Nālandā* inscription (dated AD 860) ed that *Devapāla* of Bengal had granted the request of *Balaputra*<sup>13</sup> to build a Buddhist monastery near Bodh Gaya, also signifies relationship between these two distant countries.

Candi Mendut (Figure 5-13) is the oldest among the three well known Javanese shrines, including Pawon and Borobudur, which was built during the Sailendra dynasty around early-ninth century AD. It is a small brick shrine<sup>14</sup> of a single cell with an entry offset on the high square platform. The stairs projecting from the northwest side of the platform connect it to the ground. The terrace surrounding the temple was for *pradakshina* or circumambulating rituals, where outer walls are adorned with bas-reliefs of *Bodhisattvas* (Buddhist divinities). The main room housed three beautifully carved large stone statues; at the center, a three-metre tall statue of *Dhyāni* Buddha *Vairocana*, at its left is the statue of *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* and at the right is *Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi*. The interior of the central cell has a vaulted roof, whereas from outside the roof appears as a tiered crown shape. The ground plan of this shrine is similar to *Bharat Bhayna*, except for the multi-tiered platform, whereas Barabadur has a multi-tiered platform crowned with *stūpas*. There

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<sup>12</sup> *Fa-Hien* and *Hsüan-Tsang* made their journey to India on land route but *Fa-Hien* returned by the sea route passing through *Tāmralipti*, Sri Lanka and Java.

<sup>13</sup> *Balaputra* was the *maharaja* of *Srivijaya* in the 9th century AD, as well as the former head of the Sailendra dynasty.

<sup>14</sup> The building material of Candi Mendut is actually brick that was dressed in stone.

could have been an intermediate shrine types in Java - between the small Candi Mendut and the grand Barabadur -with a similar footprint to *Bharat Bhayna*; however, this cannot be identified with any certainty.

A similar model can be identified in Cambodia, the brick-built Baksei Chamkrong (Figure 5-14) temple which has a shrine atop a multi-layered platform, is a small Hindu temple located in the Angkor complex built by Harshavarman I (AD 910–923), who was a Khmer king. The beginning of this Khmer empire was in 802 AD when its founder Jayavarman II (AD 802-850) pronounced himself the universal monarch (*chakravartin*) and declared independence from Java (Cœdès, 1968: 97-103). According to the K.235 stone inscription of Cambodia, Jayavarman II was a prince at the Sailendra court in Java and brought back Javanese Sailendra art and culture to his home in Cambodia. These Javanese influences can be seen on many earlier temples of Cambodia (Dumarçay et al., 2001: 45). Though Baksei Chamkrong is a Hindu temple, it could have been based on any Javanese Buddhist model which appears very similar to *Bharat Bhayna*.

The tiered platform of Baksei Chamkrong measures 27 meters across at the base and 15 at the top for an overall height of 13 meters. Four tiers gradually reduce toward the top; the first three are simply treated with a plain cladding, while the last forms a moulded plinth for the sanctuary tower. Four steep stairs, each rising is a single flight from four cardinal points framed at each change in height with side walls that restrict access to the various levels. The brick built sanctuary opens to the east. This form is quite identical to previously stated most rectangular shrine structures of Bengal, except platform of these Bengal shrines were rectangular instead of square form and they had *pañchayatana* shrines.

The central structure of the Pre Rup temple (Figure 5-15) built in AD 962 by Khmer king Rajendravarman (AD 944-968) has similar features to the Baksei Chamkrong; in addition, it contains *pañchayatana* shrines and a rectangular shape. From the analysis of the ground plan and architectural form the central structure of Pre Rup temple represents a mature and developed

version of *Bharat Bhayna*. Applying a reverse simulation, during fifth century *Bharat Bhayna* could have had many basic characteristics of this shrine structure in a simplified version. Keeping this developmental trend in mind, and based on the conjectural ground plan of *Bharat Bhayna* (Figure 5-10), a conjectural architectural form is proposed in Figure 5-16, which incorporates all available and relevant data.

Because the present condition provides little information about the superstructure, as well as on parallel developments in Bengal, a conjectural virtual model is built based on certain assumptions. First, as from the archaeological findings it is thought that *Bharat Bhayna* was built during Gupta period around fifth century AD, it is assumed that it should have features of the period. Though these archaeological findings are not enough to reconstruct the temple type solely based on these, it nevertheless provides guidelines for any virtual reconstruction, especially of the ground plan. Secondly, the other extant Buddhist architecture of Bengal, though equally in ruined condition, provides important clues regarding spatial organization, functional arrangements and geometry. Thirdly, *Bharat Bhayna* is situated in Bengal which continued to maintain connections with both the Buddhist centre of *Nālandā* and the Far Eastern Buddhist nations. As an intermediate point both in terms of geographical location and temporal development, Bengal *vihāras* should therefore reflect influences from *Nālandā* and other earlier Indian architectural prototypes, as well as should have influenced the architecture of the culturally and politically connected Far East countries. Similar method was used by Naqi (Naqi and Mollick, 2004), Rashid (Rashid, 2006), Myer (Myer, 1961) and other scholars to construct a virtual model of *Pabārpur vihāra*. And finally, during Gupta period and thereafter, as Buddha was adopted as an *avatār* of Vishnu, Buddhism come in closer contact with Hinduism and interexchange of religious practices and architectural features take to an advanced level. As a result, later shrines, irrespective of being Hindu or Buddhist, continue to repeat these influenced elements.

As the archaeological layout of *Bharat Bhayna* (Figure 5-2) shows concentric walls and a thicker outer wall, showing similarities with *Nandangaṛh* (Figure 5-1), *Harish Chandra Rājār Dhibi* (Figure 5-3) and Pre Rup temple (Figure 5-15) suggest Bharat Bhayna had four concentric tiers at different levels, gradually decreases upwards. Four staircases of 6.45 m (21'2") wide and of a single flight, led up to the raised platform that was an ambulatory path (*pradakshina path*), the floor of which was 12.5 m (41'0") above ground level. This ambulatory walkway had a floor that was 5.36 m (17'7") wide. At this top level a wider staircase consisting of a few (probably five) steps led up to the porch entranceway that extended outward to the eastern side of the central structure. This offset was 3.6 m (11'10") x 16.7 m (54'9"), which could have been a columned porch similar to other Gupta temples of India. This porch - part of the internal *pradakshina path* – was 1.47 m (4'10") wide that ran around the central cell. Interior of this path had a corbelled roof gradually increasing from the outer wall towards the inner sanctum (*garbhāgriha*) of the central structure. Furthermore, the steps immediately to the front of the vestibule extended onto the floor of the external ambulatory space. The internal *pradakshina path* threshold was raised 1.5 m (5'0") above the height of the top platform floor.

Between this internal *pradakshina path* and the *garbhāgriha* a space was created as an offset of the cell which could have been an earlier shape of the Buddhist *maṇḍapa*. It is a 6.75m (22'2") x 2.23m (7'6") space with a corbelled vault. Accessed through the *maṇḍapa*, the next space is the central *Garbhāgriha* which was a 5.74m (18'10") square room dedicated to the shrine's images. The back part of this relatively large *garbhāgriha* had a raised floor or platform to accommodate the icons. The size of the room suggests the presence of multiple images instead of one, probably there were three images. The largest of the three was placed in the centre with the other two flanking it. . Similar arrangement could be seen in the interior of the early-ninth century Javanese temple, Candi Mendut (Figure 5-17). Probably the interior wall was plain, like the other *vihāra* shrines of Bengal.

The *garbhāgriha* area was covered by a corbelled dome formed out of layers of overlapping brick. The peripheral interior wall of this room was probably 6 m (20') high, which is half of the platform height, whereas the centre of the corbelled roof was probably 3 m (10') higher than the side walls. The only surviving cell roof of mediaeval Bengal, which identified at *Rupbānmurā vihāra*, had a corbelled roof (Ahmed, 1997: 73). Here at Bharat Bhayna, the *garbhāgriha* was surrounded by massive walls that have a cross-section of about 2.87 m (9'5") to carry the crown of the shrine.

Externally, the height of the internal *pradakshina path* mass appeared lower than the *garbhāgriha* that had a multi-tiered crown topped by a *stūpa*. According to the archaeological findings *Bharat Bhayna* was built around 5<sup>th</sup> century AD that suggests a proto-*Nāgara* crown similar to the *Daśavatāra* Temple - Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh (Figure 5-18). As a temple of the fifth century (Later Gupta), its top did not have a height or curvature shape as the later *Nāgara Śikhara*; rather, it probably still emulated a stepped profile. Analyzing *Nāgara Śikhara* morphology, Meister also suggested a proto-*Nāgara* superstructure for the developed Gupta temple type such as the *Daśavatāra* Temple (Meister, 1988-89: 279-280).

The *mandapa* appeared flat-roofed from the exterior; as the *mandapa* did not have a crown it suggested an intermediate level between the lower mass of *pradakshina path* and the crown over the *garbhāgriha* mass. Four miniature shrines, which could have been miniature versions of the *garbhāgriha* with superstructure, sat at the four corners of the top platform, making it a *pañchayatana* temple. As a whole, this virtual reconstruction of *Bharat Bhayna* represents a mature Bengal shrine of the Gupta period.

## 5.2 Origin and Morphology of cruciform shrine structures

So far, the archaeological evidences and cognitive analysis through virtual reconstruction of *Bharat Bhayna* confirms that Buddhist shrines of Bengal during the Gupta period were square or rectangular in plan. On the other hand, it is evident that cruciform shrines were built before the Pala Empire, such as during the post-Gupta period, by the kings of Deva dynasty; a few of these, such as *Sālban*, *Ananda* and *Bhojā vibhāra* – are large enough to prove these cruciform shrine were in a mature form of the cruciform Buddhist shrine. Based on copperplate inscriptions of *Vāinyagupta*, which was found at the first construction phase of *Sālban vibhāra*, Hossain suggests that the earlier phase of *Sālban vibhāra* was built during the later Gupta period around sixth century AD (Hossain and Dewan, 2004: 12). If the hypothesis, that cruciform shrine developed from the rectangular shrine is correct, then based on stated evidence this transformation occurred within a short period of time during the later Gupta and post-Gupta periods.

Buddhist architecture was always influenced by their schools of thought<sup>15</sup> and these influence the shrine architecture and determine their functional arrangement; that is why development of shrine has a similar trend as the development of thoughts. Previously described<sup>16</sup> wing shrine development probably followed the main shrine development as in larger *vibhāra* complexes these were used as secondary shrines. Conjectural architectural model of *Bharat Bhayna* (Figure 5-16) shows it already passed through previously stated steps, such as addition of *maṇḍapa* and *pradakṣhina path*. How could these two phases have developed? For *maṇḍapa* a small space needed to be added on the front, in most cases *maṇḍapa* was added as a small cell. Considering North Indian *Nāgara* tradition, after the addition of the *maṇḍapa* the ground plan should resemble a *triratha* shrine. . Conjectural ground plan of *Damdām Pireṣṭhan Dhibī* (Figure 5-11) shows a similar shrine there, though its *maṇḍapa* does not look like a mature one; probably it represents an earlier

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<sup>15</sup> Buddhist schools of thought were discussed on chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> Development of the wing shrine of Bengal *vibhāra* was discussed in chapter 4.

developmental phase (D2 of Figure 5-19) of the *maṇḍapa*. The *pañchayatana* (five shrined) shrine (Figure 5-20) unearthed at the site of *Karṇasuvarṇa* in Murshidabad district has barely got the foundations remaining, but clearly shows a mature *maṇḍapa*. In *Nālandā* this was also a regular practice; temple site 3 has a mature *maṇḍapa* similar to D3 of Figure 5-19.

*Pradakṣhina* or circumambulation is one of the most important part of the Buddhist rituals since its early days and therefore all along had remained integral to any sacred structure - *stūpa* or shrines (Rashid, 2007: 5). In case of the main shrine, the *pradakṣhina path* was incorporated long ago as an open space. Its addition as an internal space gives the shrine a new form, probably its addition to a wing shrine occurred during this period, or later, following this tradition of incorporating *pradakṣhina path* such as main shrine. The conjectural architectural plan of *Bharat Bhayna* (Figure 5-10) shows that it belongs to this special group of early Bengal shrines with internal *pradakṣhina path*. This *triratha* plan acts as a unique model for later shrine development in Bengal, which needs to be discussed later.

The addition of *pradakṣhina path* differed in its approach from one case to another; the earlier phase of the temple (Figure 5-21) at the north-eastern corner of *Sālban viḥāra* shows a distinct development pattern. As the outer wall was thicker compared to the *garbhāgriha*, probably the approach to the entrance acted here as a proto-*maṇḍapa* or *pradakṣhina path* added here without any *maṇḍapa*. At a later stage a *maṇḍapa* was added after the *pradakṣhina path*. Another development path can be observed in temple no 1 of *Bhāsu viḥāra* (Figure 5-5), where four niches were added outside the *pradakṣhina path*. This prototype was evolved following *Nālandā*, where four niches around a *garbhāgriha* was a common feature for the shrine structure (*Nālandā mahāvihāra* Temple no 13). Due to the missing superstructure, identifying complete architectural characteristics of *Bhāsu viḥāra* temple no 1 becomes complex; however, from the architectural ground plan (Figure 5-5) and site view (Figure 5-22) it looks certain that three niches do not seat on *garbhāgriha* wall but outside of the first *pradakṣhina path*.

Consistent with the architectural trend, this style continued further and took the form of the cruciform shrine as A5 of Figure 5-19 illustrates, though similar shaped shrines have not been identified as yet. Recent excavation at *Bhāsu vihāra* complex, however, has unearthed a cruciform shrine structure with at least four construction phases. After partial excavation in 2003 Smith proposed a provisional layout of its cruciform shrine (Smith *et al.*, 2004). During 2007-08 further excavation was carried out on the same site but the published archaeological layout does not provide any conclusive proposal about its architecture (Alam *et al.*, 2008a: 17-18). To achieve the conjectural architectural plan, Smith's partial plan has to be superimposed over Alam's archaeological plan, which advances some definite clues regarding the architectural layout beyond Alam's drawing. Finally, considering the developmental trend, the conjectural ground plan of *Bhāsu vihāra* temple 2 (Figure 5-12) was proposed by this author that shows a similar cruciform shrine as A5 of Figure 5-19. In this shrine four more spaces around the *pradakshina path* are present, probably the eastern one was used as a *maṇḍapa* and the remaining three were small image chambers similar to later Bagan (also Pagan) temples (Figure 5-23), such as Pyathadar Temple (twelfth century AD), Htilominlo Temple (AD 1218) and Thitsawadi Temple (AD 1334).

The next is the important phase when four image took permanent shelter within the shrine and two different development paths result in similar formation (D6 of Figure 5-19). Three small image niches of the previous phase (*Bhāsu vihāra* temple 2) gain more importance and four images lose any hierarchy. The precise religious shifts behind this tendency are unclear but it is certain that *Vajrayāna* played a vital role behind it. As a result of giving all four images the same importance the primary image lost its position and become general. The first construction phase of the temple (Figure 5-24) at *Rupbānmurā vihāra* has a similar ground plan, where the four image chambers are equal in size and there is no central image chamber. The first construction phase of the central temple (Figure 5-25) at *Bhojā vihāra* also has a similar arrangement with mature shrine chambers. From the archaeological excavation little is known about the first construction phase of these two



shrines, although according to the trends in shrine development it is certain that these shrines were cruciform shaped.

Trend of *pañchayatana* shrine during the Gupta period has been discussed in the preceding chapter and on the light of this discussion it looks positive that *Bharat Bhayna* was a *pañchayatana* shrine. What happened to *pañchayatana* shrine if ideology takes a twist to give equal importance all four surrounding shrines? It is quite significant that rotating the central shrine of *Bharat Bhayna* with four cardinal intervals produces a similar result as the earlier phases of *Rupbānmurā* and *Bhojā vibhāra* (Figure 5-26) which suggests a development pattern to turn a *triratha* Gupta shrine into a cruciform *Vajrayāna* shrine. However, it is also possible that *triratha* plan took a longer journey through the addition of sub-shrines like the *Nālandā mahāvihāra* temples. The existence of four sub-shrines in *pañchayatana* and four mature shrines in the cruciform shrine type suggest the development path could be different but there was a clear progress towards the cruciform shrine. Although the archaeological excavation at *Bharat Bhayna* does not provide traces of further construction phases to examine this hypothesis, the superstructure of surviving later cruciform shrines (e.g., *Ānanda* temple at Bagan of AD 1105) bears their ancestor's *pañchayatana* crown (Figure 5-27).

From earlier construction phases of the shrines of *Rupbānmurā vibhāra* and *Bhojā vibhāra* it can be assumed that the earlier cruciform shrine was simple and due to the faster change in the shape functional hierarchy<sup>17</sup> did not follow accordingly. Both shrines have four small image chambers, compared to the pervious single large central image chamber, without any *maṇḍapa* and bounded by a *pradakṣhina path*. The centre contained a solid or a void, since no central image chamber was needed and image chambers were added around it. The necessity of the *maṇḍapa* was felt very shortly and alteration occurred soon, probably that is what makes so difficult the tracing of this

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<sup>17</sup> Use of *maṇḍapa* can be trace back during the *pañchayatana* shrine development phase, but it was absent at the earlier phases of *Rupbānmurā vibhāra* and *Bhojā vibhāra* shrines.

construction phase through excavation<sup>18</sup>. The next construction phase solved all these problems of earlier phases, as the second phase of the shrine (Figure 5-24) at *Rupbānmurā vibhāra* take a complete shape of early cruciform shrine and becomes an example for later shrines.

The centre of earlier cruciform shrine remains within the shade, there are two possibilities; the first, according to the archaeological report on *Rupbānmurā vibhāra* lack of connection towards the center core suggest it was a solid. While if the assumption is true that the cruciform developed from the *triratha* shrine, then there would have been a void core which cannot be found till date. Then again, the existence of a void core in developed shrines of later periods (central shrine of *Pahārpur vibhāra*) would suggest that it was there from an earlier period. Probably previously described reconstruction was done over it within a short period that makes harder to trace the void core, moreover no specific excavation was taken to examine this hypothesis.

On the second construction phase of the shrine at *Rupbānmurā vibhāra* (Figure 5-24), the *maṇḍapa* was incorporated, which was bounded by the *pradakṣhina path* and the previous hierarchy was followed again. According to the trends in a mature *triratha* shrine, the image chamber (*garbhāgriha*) inhabits the centre of the square shrine, not outside of it. As the cruciform shrine has four *garbhāgrihas*, if they share the center core that should be equal. To separate the *garbhāgrihas* from each other the previous core was kept unused, and new cores were extended to cover previous *garbhāgrihas* and the *pradakṣhina path* shifted outward to accommodate the new arrangement. Similar expansion can be seen at *Bhojā vibhāra* where the narrow space between the new core expansion wall and the previous core kept unfilled as it was not considered important.

Probably both the earlier basic and the later revised cruciform versions were used as models for later cruciform shrines. The central shrine of *Pahārpur vibhāra* (Figure 5-28) and *Shamsuṇḍar tillā* (Figure 5-29) of South Tripura developed from the basic model as both of them contain central

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<sup>18</sup> According to excavation report earlier phase of shrine at *Rupbānmurā* cannot be identified completely.

void cells. In case of *Shamsuṇḍar tillā* the central cell remains accessible but due to limited published material the pattern of interconnection cannot be fully confirmed. Based on the limited available material (an image and a partial ground plan),<sup>19</sup> it can be assumed that the shared central cell was accessible from four cardinal directions. All *maṇḍapas* were attached to the central *garbhāgriha* as in the basic model of the cruciform type and it was bounded by the *pradakṣhina path*. Conversely, the central shrine at *Pabārpur viḥāra* had an inaccessible central core cell that attracted the attention of many scholars and was interpreted in different ways (Rashid, 2007: 2), an aspect which need to be discussed later. In any case, this central void core and the composition of the *garbhāgrihas* suggests that it as a developed form of the basic cruciform shape previously indicated. Without the square *maṇḍapa* the schematic arrangement of this shrine is same as the basic form (D6 of Figure 5-19), whereas this addition of the *maṇḍapa* and the enlarged size made it mature.

Similarly, the central shrine of *Sālban viḥāra* (Figure 5-30) developed from the revised version (D7 of Figure 5-19) through the addition of another interior space fronting the *maṇḍapa*. In this case the new rooms become primary *maṇḍapas* and the previous rooms become *antarāla*<sup>20</sup>. Excavated ground plan of *Sālban viḥāra* shows the *garbhāgrihas* were inserted in the central square and there was a solid core at the centre. A small *antarāla* connects every *garbhāgriha* to the square *maṇḍapas* and a *pradakṣhina path* surrounds it all. Only *Sālban viḥāra* and *Pabārpur viḥāra* had these mature forms of Buddhist *maṇḍapas* with a square shape and enough public gathering space within the surveyed area.

Later development of the revised version is easily traceable on the ground plan of the second construction phase of *Rupbānmurā* shrine (Figure 5-24) where the eastern image chamber was divided into three chambers to accommodate three images. This is a sign of another change in Buddhist religious philosophy that probably evolved in the *Samatāṭa* region since the later

<sup>19</sup> Both were published in Indian Archaeology- A review 2000-2001 and 1999-2000.

<sup>20</sup> *Antarāla* is a small antechamber between the *garbhāgriha* (image chamber) and the *maṇḍapa*.

development of this style could only be identified there and only in the later phases of the central shrines of *Ānanda* and *Bhojā vibāras*. Although the influence of this ideology was not limited within these borders and is traceable in *Pahārpur vibāra*, where wing shrines were three-chambered and contained three separate images. Similar arrangement in Candi Plaosan in Java (Figure 5-16) shows that this ideology had influenced territories as far as Java, so it is anticipated that this idea was flourished in *Samataṭa* with its full potential<sup>21</sup>.

To fit this idea within the developmental trends, the next phase exhibits a twelve-shrined temple (D9 of Figure 5-19). The first and second construction phases of the shrine at *Ānanda vibāra* (Figure 5-31) had a similar layout showing twelve image chambers arranged in four wings. In each wing a *maṇḍapa* was shared by three cells where the central cell was comparatively wider than other two. According to Alam, among these three cells some were image chambers (Alam *et al.*, 2008c: 31), although later construction phases (fourth and sixth construction phases) suggest that the image chambers were inserted within the core square<sup>22</sup>. In that case these three cells acted as *antarālas* to give primacy to the images (Figure 5-32). Conversely, as the central shrine of *Bhojā vibāra* developed from the basic form, it did not include any *antarāla* but only had a *maṇḍapa* and a *garbhāgriha*. Probably during third construction phase it had three image chambers in each of the wings, which cannot be entirely confirmed due to lack of published information. .

These four mature cruciform shrines of Bengal (central shrines of *Pahārpur vibāra*, *Sālban vibāra*, *Ānanda vibāra* and *Bhojā vibāra*) represent the finest specimen of the post-Gupta period. The simultaneous existence of both the square shaped shrine of the Gupta and the mature cruciform

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<sup>21</sup> Because earlier examples of three-chambered shrine trend belongs to *Samataṭa* zone, such as shrines of *Ānanda* and *Bhojā vibāra*.

<sup>22</sup> In Buddhist architecture of Bengal there are many occasion where image chambers were kept and reused on later construction phases. The main image chamber of fourth phase of central shrine at *Ānanda vibāra* fits suitably as an image chamber of earlier first and second phase. Similar things happen in *Sālban vibāra* where construction phase three is reusing the main image chamber of phase two, though there total arrangement is different.

shaped shrine of the post-Gupta periods proves that the latter development occurred within a short period of time, probably during the later Gupta and post-Gupta era. But by the end of the eighth century AD as yet unidentified ideological and political changes influence Buddhist shrine architecture and the trend changes rapidly towards a rectangular shrine instead of a continuation of the cruciform shape discussed above. .

### 5.3 Mature cruciform shrines

A clear idea about developmental trends and knowledge of their starting and finishing points are necessary to understand any architectural morphology. In the evolution of the cruciform Buddhist shrine of Bengal, following the previous discussion, the mature Gupta shrine of *Bharat Bhayna* acted as the start point, the development trends were identified based on the analyses of ground plans and a finishing point was established. The conjectural model of *Bharat Bhayna* (Figure 5-16) gives us a general idea about what the form was in the early period, while the development trends (Figure 5-19 and Figure 5-26) show how it evolved towards the cruciform as it gained maturity. Likewise, the ground plan of any mature cruciform shrine provides certain clues about how significant the form was. Unfortunately, none of these survived in their entirety to provide a complete picture. Thus a conjectural model of the mature cruciform shrine is necessary to complete the study of the evolution process.

Four large cruciform shrines have been explored within Bangladesh (i.e., within the area surveyed): *Bhojā vihāra*, *Ananda vihāra*, *Sālbān vihāra* and *Pabārpur vihāra*; among these major monuments the ground plan of *Pabārpur vihāra* shows advanced level and it offers the worthwhile physical remains for an informed conjectural reconstruction. The first systematic excavation was carried out on *Pabārpur* as early as AD 1923<sup>23</sup> (Ahmed, 1997: 101-102; Cunningham, 1994: 117) and its results make it the earliest explored and recorded cruciform *vihāra* shrine in this region that attracted scholarly attention.. As a result, a great quantity of work has been undertaken on this shrine and unlike other examples the results have mostly been published. Since AD 1923 excavation work

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<sup>23</sup> Hamilton marked *Pabārpur* mound as a potential archaeological site during his visit in 1807-12, later Francis Buchanan provided a brief notice on the mound and following his opinion, that this mound was a Buddhist *stūpa* was adopted by Westmacott. In 1879 Alexander Cunningham undertook a few superficial excavations in the central shrine zone where he identified a room with projections and concluded that this mound was a ruin of a Brahmanical (Hindu) temple. The first systematic excavation was undertaken jointly during 1923 by the Varendra Research Society and Calcutta University under the direction of D R Bhandarkar. In 1925-26 Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay conducted excavations in the central shrine zone and provided a ground plan of the shrine.

has continued<sup>24</sup> (Hossain and Alam, 2003: 1-4) on this site, which provides us with a good quantity of archaeological findings associated with this architecture. However, even after such a sustained period of scholarly work little is established conclusively about its superstructure. Given the wealth of data and the fact that the analysis of the archaeological plan of the central shrine offers us an example of the most advanced level in cruciform development, the *Pabāṅpur vihāra* has been chosen to study the end point to develop a conjectural model.

Before going any further the present status of the monument needs to be observed carefully. Systematic archaeological excavations identified that this huge monastic complex consisted of a cruciform stepped structure within a courtyard formed by a large square perimeter building of monastic cells (Figure 5-33). This lofty pyramidal structure lies in the middle of the 22 acre courtyard. The structure rises upward in a tapering mass of three receding terraces, which, although in ruins, reaches a height of 23 meters (Figure 5-34). Each of the terraces had a *pradakṣhina path* around the monument. On the topmost terrace (of the existing ruin) there were four antechambers on the projecting arms of the cross. The overall design of this complicated architecture is centred on a square hollow shaft, which runs down from the present top level of the mound to the level of the second terrace (Nazimuddin and John, 1986: 23).

Rashid summarized previous scholarship (Rashid, 2007: 3) and suggests two hypotheses that try to define the structure in terms of its function. The first one demonstrate the building as a temple, mainly the *Pañcha Ratha* type, that uses Javanese temples like, Candi Loro Jongrang and Candi Sewu as visual parallels. Dikshit was the first to make such an assumption that was subsequently supported by other scholars. Certainly there exists some visual similarities with the angular

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<sup>24</sup> After Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay's excavation until 1933-34, the next excavation work was undertaken by Kashinath Dikshit under the Archaeological Survey of India, although G C Chandra had conducted some work during 1930-31 and 1931-32. After independence of Bangladesh (YEAR) the first and second phases of excavation were carried out between 1982 and 1985, and between 1986 and 1990, respectively. Recently excavation was resumed again in 2007-2008.

projections, location of antechambers and the truncated pyramidal shape. However, the manner in which spaces are organized in a Javanese temple with a central chamber and four surrounding ante chambers which potentially demonstrates an overall scheme of convergence from the outside to the centre, is radically opposite to the scheme adopted in *Pahāṛpur Mahāvihāra*. In contrast to the central chamber of the Javanese temple, the centre of the composition is occupied by a solid core with shaft that was inaccessible from all sides. Four antechambers were placed in four cardinal directions and multiple terraces were added as the scheme diverged out to the periphery (Figure 5-28).

The other hypothesis demonstrates this structure as a *stūpas* or *stūpa*-shrine, as claimed by scholars like Myer (Myer, 1961), Samuel (Samuel, 2002) and also Rashid (Rashid, 2007), who considered this central core as a solid core of the *stūpa* and the chambers as additions to accommodate certain ritualistic practices. Myer has proposed a *stūpa* as the most possible superstructure for the top; but neither he offered any reason, symbolic or technical, nor explained any relationship with the *Stūpa* form he proposed (Rashid, 2006: 3). Myer had done his analysis on *Pahāṛpur* (1961) at a time when most Buddhist architecture of Bengal had not been excavated or explored and his analysis was based on visual similarity with distant structures. In doing so Myer proposed fairly homogenous and linear development of Buddhist architecture from its origin in India and moving east towards South East Asia as he argued for visual connection between the central shrine of *Pahāṛpur* with *Nālandā* and Java due to its geographical position between them and that seems a positive contribution towards future research.

Samuel (Samuel, 2002) had the opportunity to work on other Buddhist architecture of Bengal<sup>25</sup>, as his intention was to investigate the iconography and architecture of Tantric Buddhism in Bengal and excavation on most sites had already been done by 2002. . Analysing related Buddhist

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<sup>25</sup> Many Buddhists sites were excavated before 2002, when Samuel published his study. But during the study period of Myer (1961) only *Pahāṛpur* was excavated.



architectures, he divides cruciform Buddhist shrines into two main types; Type A, has a solid core with a surrounding passageway and relatively small chambers attached in the four directions. He described this type as a clear *stūpa*. Type B, does not have a solid core, its place is taken by a large central chamber accessible from the outside and clearly intended to contain the main cult-image of the temple. This type B is not strictly speaking a *stūpa*, since the main focus in these buildings is on the cult-image in the central chamber. As the walled-in central shaft had no accessibility he considered the central shrine of *Pabāṛpur vibhāra* as type A and suggested that it was a *stūpa* (Samuel, 2002: 46-48).

It is interesting that Samuel (Samuel, 2002) somehow missed Myer's (Myer, 1961) research, who first proposed the shrine of *Pabāṛpur* as a *stūpa*, and chose a fresh start. To prove that *Pabāṛpur* was a *stūpa* (type A), Samuel compared it with two Pagan temples with *stūpa* top; *Lemyethna* and *Myin-Pya-Gu* (Figure 5-35). But his proposal that the solid core type A contained a *stūpa* top does not comply with *Ananda* temple of Pagan because with almost an identical ground arrangement the *Ananda* temple (Figure 5-27 and Figure 5-36) is crowned by a *śikhara*. Though his analysis on Buddhist *maṇḍala* seems compressive than his architectural analysis.

Next, Rashid (Rashid, 2006), considering the central structure as a *stūpa* ended up with a reconstructed view of the possible three dimensional articulation of the central structure of *Pabāṛpur Mahāvihāra* (Figure 5-37) which is similar to Myer's first proposal (Figure 5-38). Additionally, Rashid proposed the crown *stūpa* as earlier form than Myer. Rashid first observed the developmental trend of Bengal Buddhist architecture and cautiously proposed the addition of the *maṇḍapa* and the *pradakṣhina path*, which is a major contribution towards future reconstruction. In his subsequent publication (Rashid, 2007) he added the formation of the *stūpa* and the shrine *stūpa*, again a significant observation. Accepting such a developmental trend on the ground plan why he propose such a basic *stūpa* crown is not clear (Figure 5-37). This trend should have

influence on three dimensional form of this architecture if it influences the ground plan such a long period.

Rashid's analysis is more symbolic than technical in its impact; and when he proposed a form only slightly different from Myer's, such as the form of *pradakshina path*, he does not provide any rational analysis but illustrates those formal changes on the virtual model. He somehow overlooks Naqi and Mollick's (Naqi and Mollick, 2004) paper where the authors had already proposed a similar roof structure for the *pradakshina path* through a careful technical analysis. Though Rashid's assumption of the *pradakshina path* with 16 projecting angle shows his understanding on the developmental trends of the shrine-*stupa* but like many others he does not provide any reason for this. His observation about the platform, as the last offset of the structure was stair rather a room, is a great contribution because pervious scholars used to suggest this as room like Pagan temples which does not fit with the development trend.

Thus it can be summarized that previously proposed models had some merit but also difficulties to arrive at a conclusive decision. Based on those previous rational points a conjectural model has to be developed to get a complete idea about the early Buddhist architecture of Bengal. From historical, archaeological, religious and architectural trends, and from the symbolic and geometric analysis, certain assumptions of earlier scholars appear rational, which could guide us in formulating a hypothesis. First, *Pabārpur*, being situated in a strategic point between the Indian subcontinent and the Far East, must have maintained a connection with both (Naqi and Mollick, 2004: 71). Secondly, being one of the monuments of high reputation, as attested through the literary and epigraphic records, it is very much possible that the shrine of the *Sompura Mahāvihāra* was used as religious icon by the contemporary and later artist in different art forms (Rashid, 2006: 4). Thirdly, it is difficult to imagine that artisan(s) had come up with an entirely unique design; rather, it is likely that they emulated certain models and made alterations to meet the new demands of ritual practice or political aspirations (Rashid, 2006: 5).

As the superstructure is now entirely lost, it will be wise to start from the base to make some conclusive decisions. The structure below the third terrace level of the central shrine shows no evidence of vertical extension suggestive of two different levels of terraces (Naqi and Mollick, 2004: 76). Though terrace configurations proposed by Naqi (Figure 5-39) were incorrect, from archaeological evidences it is clear that the second terrace is higher than the first one similar to Rashid's model (Figure 5-37). Entry to the lower terrace was from the eastern side (Ahmed, 1997: 104) and probably only a stair connected the first terrace to the second one from the eastern side. Secondly, terraces acted as the base for the shrine structure and there were four stairs from the second terrace to the top of the plinth. There was a later period shrine on the *vihāra* yard (Figure 5-33): on the northern side of the central *vihāra*, which may best be described as a miniature replica or model of the Main Temple. It contained exactly the same number of angular projections as found in the Main shrine. This cruciform four-faced shrine had symmetrical angular projections, and measured 48 feet square. The scheme of ornamentation with projecting cornices adopted in this shrine also resembles roughly that of the Main Temple (Chandra and Dikshit, 1936: 118-119). That this model temple had steps in the four cardinal directions for access, suggest similar arrangement in the central shrine (Ahmed, 1997). Based on the development trend, the Buddhist shrine development of Bengal, it seems certain that last offset of the structure was a stair like Rashid's proposal; comprising the *garbhāgriha*, the *maṇḍapa* and the *pradakshina path*. Rashid's stair looks appropriate for other mature shrines like *Sālban* and *Ananda vihāra* but for *Pabārpur*, which was of a more advanced level according to the ground plan, must have had stairs with three directional accesses, similar to the stairs of Khajuraho (Figure 5-9). As *Pabārpur* was built earlier than the Khajuraho temples, its stairs should have had a more basic form than the stair of *Kandaria Mahadeva* temple.

The existing holes, high on the terrace walls, strengthen the hypothesis proposed by Naqi (Naqi and Mollick, 2004: 76) that the roof of the ambulatory space was somewhat more of a conventional

type, a pitch roof on wooden rafters. But the pitch proposed by Naqī had no basis; probably it was a misunderstanding to draw similarity with *Ānanda* temple of Pagan. As these shrines were continuations of Gupta temples<sup>26</sup> it should have had a trend of flat roofs. Though *Ānanda* temple of Pagan had a sloped roof it gives a flat shape from elevation and perspective view. Thus the *pradakṣhina path* had a flat roof on wooden rafters, probably constructed in lime concrete similar to the living cells of the *vihāra*. Though another option, the corbelled vault is also possible, similar to *Ānanda* temple of Pagan. As *Pahārpur* was built before the *Ānanda* temple of Pagan, if there was any vault it was as a basic corbelled vault. The existence of columns on the outer façade in the archaeological ground plan (Figure 5-33) suggests a columned entry for the shrine (Figure 5-28). A similar proportioning system of these columns to the Gupta temples proposes similar stone beam system on top to support the upper brick walls. This type of entry was copied four times to give the cruciform a symmetrical view.

In its simplest form a Vedic temple could be divided into two major parts. The first one, where the deity is housed, is the most sacred and protected part and is known as the *garbhāgriha*. The second part that works as a transition between the open space and the *garbhāgriha*, is the place designated for performing rituals by the laities and for placing offerings, known as the *maṇḍapa*. In larger temples this part is further subdivided into smaller sections depending on the sequences of the journey. There are also distinctions between the spatial layout of North Indian and South Indian temple types. However, the basic hierarchy that can be observed in both is the same, i.e., a space for the deity and a space for the devotees to place offerings and perform rituals. Between the 7th and 11th centuries, when the Buddhist rituals began closely paralleling Hindu rituals and the basic spatial requirement became identical, it increasingly demanded a similar of hierarchical pattern between the spaces for the deity and the devotees. The niches of the shrine were holding

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<sup>26</sup> Development of ground plan clearly suggests evolution of cruciform shrine from rectangular temples of Gupta period.

four images of the *Vajrayāna* thought became the chamber for the Gods and demanded a similar hierarchical sequence of a Vedic temple (Rashid, 2007: 10). Analyzing the developmental trends (Origin and Morphology of cruciform shrine structures) it becomes evident that this distinction created is by changing the thickness of the wall is actually common to all cruciform central structures that have been discovered so far. In the case of *Pahāṛpur Mahāvihāra* the difference between these two spaces is clearly discernible. There the outer chamber takes the shape of a colonnaded chamber as the *maṇḍapa*, and the sanctum remains unadorned providing a chthonic experience resembling the characteristics of the *garbhāgriha*.

The placement of four stone columns in a square layout in each of the *maṇḍapa* gives indication of a centralized roof structure above. A similar type of structure has been used in different shrines of India to support the roof and provide a large free space underneath, where four stone columns supported a set of stone beams at the centre of a square space, thus creating a narrow circular space around it. The central space is covered with either brick or stone corbelled vaults and the circular space is covered with stone slabs or brick vaulting system. In this system the central space resulted in a greater height than the surrounding and thus was expressed from the outside (Naqi and Mollick, 2004: 79). Presence of stone columns suggests there were four stone beams on top which was crowned by corbelled brick vaults and the narrow space was covered by a brick vaulting system. Naqi's analysis of this roofing looks the most plausible.

The *garbhāgriha* had a thicker wall than the *maṇḍapa* that suggest it was higher than the adjacent thinner walled *maṇḍapa*. From the archaeological survey it is evident that the plinth of the *garbhāgriha* was at the same level as the *maṇḍapa* and *pradakshina path*, which suggests that *Pahāṛpur* had a *garbhāgriha* arrangement much alike the *Ānanda* temple of Pagan, which has a similar plinth level with the *maṇḍapa* and a higher roof. As the *garbhāgriha* was a small chamber, it should have had a corbelled vault like the shrine at *Rupbānmurā vihāra*, the only roof reconstructed with some archaeological references. Though at this stage it is hard to determine how the roof was formed

externally due to the lack of appropriate evidence, it seems that it was flat from the outside, similar to Naqi's model except for the decorative front arch.

The central core acted as the base of the crown which need further attention to determine as it does not provide clues except for the central hole. This carefully designed shaft with no lateral access undoubtedly had symbolic meaning and its connection with the superstructure above will have further enhanced this symbolic meaning. From the ground plan analysis it was defined that the cruciform shrine had evolved from the rectangular shrine where the central void acted as the centre of the proportioning system of the whole shrine, through geometric analysis it has been proved (Figure 5-40). Though a similar geometry can be applied to a *stūpa*-shrine, the probability of it being a temple is higher as earlier Vedic temples and later Hindu temples follow similar proportioning systems (Figure 5-41).

At this point no more clues can be identified from the technical analysis of the archaeological findings of the central core. Previous scholars have tried to solve this problem based on evidence from other Buddhist architecture of India and the Far East. They did not delve deeper into the possibilities of further clues within Bengal rather considered only the formal expression of other contemporaneous and later *stūpas*. Before going that far, Bengal has potential to show further clues that need more attention.

An interesting square structure identified in the central courtyard of *Pahārpur vibhāra* adjacent to the previously stated small shrine. The structure contains composition of five bases of square form and present condition is only remains of a plinth, no more detail could be achieved from the excavation reports. Another group of structures was excavated at the South Eastern corner of the courtyard where five neatly designed structure-plinths are marked as 'Bases of 5 *stūpa*'; they were arrayed together within a rectangular compound with separate water outlet. But the square structure shows distinctive character which is similar to the proposed crown of earlier cruciform shrine (Figure 5-19). As the small shrine was a replica of the central shrine, this square structure

probably was a replica or model of the crown of the central shrine. The purpose to build such a model is not clear at this point but it could be assume that it is very much possible for the central shrine of the *Pahāṛpur Mahāvihāra* to be used as religious icon by the contemporary and later artist in different art forms.

The use of *Pahāṛpur* or other *vihāra* as a model can be identified many centuries after these were built. Darasbari Madrasa of Gaur which was erected in 909 AH (1504 AD) by Alauddin Husain Shah had a ground plan mirroring a *vihāra*. Saraswati (Saraswati, 1934: 142) and Hasan (Hasan, 1989: 66) further explore continuity of Buddhist tradition within the square brick mosque of the Sultanate period. Khare (Khare, 2004: 263) further observed that Hasan and Saraswati's observations about the Sultanate mosques showing the continuity from the Buddhist tradition also holds true for the square temples in the late mediaeval period. .

The square *ratna* temples as described by McCutcheon (McCutcheon, 1972: 235) might have emerged in the sixteenth century but there are no extant examples of that period. Khare noted that within the existing example the first *ratna* temples at Gokul Nagar (1638 CE) and Bishnupur (1643 CE) were the *pañcharatna* type. He suggests that their origin is the *pañchayatana* temples of Bengal (Khare, 2004: 256) as the earlier *pañchayatana* temples emerged with covered *pradakshina path* around the main shrine and then at upper level simple Latina aedicules were placed to surmount the subsidiary shrines on the corners, resulting in the emergence of the *pañcharatna* shrine. According to the ground plan development trend (Figure 5-19) this process had already been undertaken for the cruciform shrine and the central core with the *pradakshina path*, except that the outer projections is visually similar to any *pañcharatna* shrine of Bengal (a in Figure 5-41), surprisingly not observed by Khare. Similar proportioning system and the proposed transformation presented in b of Figure 5-41 and Figure 5-42, respectively suggest a similar crown system for *Pahāṛpur vihāra*. The *navaratna* Kantaji temple, which is a developed version of the *pañcharatna* shrine, located not far from the *Pahāṛpur vihāra*, shows another interesting feature in its

elevation (Figure 5-43). Alike other *ratna* shrines every elevation clearly shows that it is a compressed form of the cruciform. Similar crowning system can be seen at *Ananda* temple of Pagan (Figure 5-27) but previous scholars missed this character due to lack of proper understanding of developmental trend.

According to the preceding discussions, the crown on the core of *Pabārpur vihāra* was similar to *pañcharatna* temple crown and with four more crowns over the *mandapas* it should have looked like the *Ananda* temple of Pagan; however, due to its earlier construction period its appearance was more flat than the *Ananda* temple (Figure 5-44). Although Akabar (Akbar, 2004: 86) had already proposed the main temple as a *pañchayatana* based on similarities with the *Mahābodhi* temple in Bihar, due to the absence of proper architectural analysis his model lacks the four *mandapa* shrine (Figure 5-45). Naqi's model (Figure 5-39), on the other hand, lacks the *pañchayatana* central crown and except noting the visual similarity with Pagan no arguments were put forward in its favour.

As most *pañchayatana* and *pañcharatna* temples of Bengal have *Latina śikhara* and its continuation can also be seen at *Ananda* temple of Pagan, it can be easily assumed that the crown of *Pabārpur* was covered by nine *Latina śikharas* of different sizes where the central five were arranged in a *pañchayatana* or *pañcharatna* style. This arrangement of nine have a close similarity with early *śikhari* crown (Figure 5-46); Hardy (Hardy, 2002: 94) described this type of *śikhari* shrine as proto *śikhari*. During the ninth and tenth centuries AD, within the tradition of *Nāgara* temple architecture, the relatively simple shrine form known as *Latina*, with its curved spire (*śikhara*), began to develop into a complex variety composed of a number of *śikhara* forms clustered together. This architectural form is termed *Śikhari*. While the great majority of examples are in western India, its early development is in central India (modern Madhya Pradesh), which has its own "proto-*Śikhari*" monument of the eight and nine centuries AD, and is the region containing the most famous complex of *Śikhari* temples is Khajuraho which were built in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The interesting point is that not only with the proto-*śikhari* form similar to cruciform Bengal shrines,



the mature Khajuraho temples, *garbhāgriha* and the *pradakshina path* of these temples, also show similar arrangements in the ground plan, though its crown is in a mature phase (Figure 5-47). However, as Hardy established proto-*śikhari* as the earlier form of *śikhari* shrine these similarities suggest there were connections between the proto-*śikhari* of ninth century with the Later Gupta cruciform shrine of the eighth century.

Thus based on previous discussions, this conjectural model of the central shrine of *Pabāṛpur vihāra* seems the most plausible virtual reconstruction accomplished considering all available sources.

#### 5.4 Cruciform *vihāra* of post-Gupta Bengal: in light of its context

The discussions in earlier chapters regarding the political, religious, cultural and economic aspects of life in early medieval Bengal, especially during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, painted a picture of Bengali society at the time. Chapter 4 and the earlier part of this chapter discussed how Buddhist architecture evolved in early mediaeval Bengal within such a context. Morphological analysis demonstrates that the Buddhist shrine evolved over an extended period of time and during post Gupta period assumed the cruciform configuration. At this point a synthesis will be undertaken to show how the *vihāra* form developed in the light of its religious, social, political, cultural and topographical context. Further this analysis will aim to explore how mature post Gupta *vihāra*, such as *Pabārpur*, conformed to the desire of the evolved local community.

In the early period, before 500 AD, Buddhist preaching was primarily concerned with addressing social problems. However, later on Buddhism underwent dramatic changes in its trajectory (Jha, 2003: 1). Of the many changes two developments are worth mentioning: the development of the *Vajrayāna* and *mahāvihāras*. Throughout the early period, Buddhism incorporated *bhakti*<sup>27</sup> that led to the rise of a new Buddhist sect called *Vajrayāna*, having many similarities with Hinduism, especially from the ritual perspective. Secondly, early medieval eastern India witnessed the efflorescence of Buddhist *mahāvihāras* which led to the firm institutionalization of Buddhism as a religion. During the post-Gupta period, these *mahāvihāras* had become the centre of both Buddhist religious and other social activities. It is interesting to note that during the post-Gupta period when many parts of India were in economic decline, Bengal engaged in the building of *mahāvihāras*.

Between the 4th-7th centuries AD ancient Indian society was in a state of transformation. Urban centres were in decline from the end of the 3rd century AD and by the close of the 5th and into the 6th centuries AD many were deserted (Desap, 1990: 5). As a result, Buddhist the centre at

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<sup>27</sup> The influence of *Bhakti* on Buddhism was discussed in an earlier chapter (3.1.2: Influence of *bhakti* on *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhism).

*Nālandā* was losing its status, whereas Hiuen-Tsung observed the flourishing state of monastic life in Bengal (Ramachandran, 1951: 227). From an archaeological perspective, when almost all early Indian urban centres had either disappeared or had decayed significantly after the Guptas, Bengal had continuation of its urban tradition into the early medieval period (Thakur, 1987: 207). Many cities of Bengal, such as *Mahāsthāngarh* (*Puṇḍravardhana*), *Chandraketugarh*, *Bangarh*, and *Tāmrāliptī*, were holding their position during the post-Gupta period.

Along with these earlier established cities, a rise of many small towns can be observed in Bengal during this period. The feudatory system, which can be traced back to the early-Gupta period, had established its important place within the administrative system and these feudatory kings (*samantha*) become key figures within their local societies. Similarly, as the economy was flourishing, some merchants were gaining status within the society. To maintain their social and religious status they started contributing through gifts (*dāna*) towards the *vihāras*, as many of the *vihāras* and *mahāvihāras* had already become the focus of local societies. From a religious perspective, *dāna* (gift) was important for lay people to ensure breaking the cycle of rebirth. Such religious practice was in place since the emergence of the *Theravāda* tradition, and was elevated to a regular practice during the post-Gupta period when many grant inscriptions were issued by feudatory kings (*samantha*)<sup>28</sup> and merchants.

The grant towards *vihāra* in the form of land and villages can be seen during the Gupta period, which saw significant increase during the post-Gupta period. Hiuen-Tsung informs that the *Nālandā viihāra* was maintained out of the revenues of about a hundred villages granted to this institution and in the time of I-Tsing this number appears to have risen to two hundred (Sharma, 1958: 317). As a result of the process of land grants these temples and monasteries developed as semi-independent entities. Unlike the earlier Buddhist monuments situated near towns, the *vihāras*

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<sup>28</sup> Two Ashrafpur copper plate inscriptions describe land donation by both Devakhadga (late 7<sup>th</sup> century AD) and his son *Rājābhatta* (early 8<sup>th</sup> century AD) towards Buddhist developments.

of this period emerged independently of the towns, and functioned as self-sufficient economic units (Desap, 1990: 16). It is also remarkable that the *viḥāras* that were built earlier continued to remain active during this period. As a result, many *viḥāras* were also active within the city or its immediate periphery, renowned *po-shi-po*<sup>29</sup> *viḥāra* was only 20 li (about 7 miles) from the capital of *Puṇḍravardhana*. In case of *Pahāṇpur mahāviḥāra* the distance from nearby town *Mahāsthāngarḥ* was about fifty kilometer, roughly a ten-hour walk.<sup>30</sup>

Not only through land grants, the rulers also continued to support *viḥāra* in many other forms. The Chinese monk, Sheng-chi, who visited Samatāṭa in the latter half of the 7th century AD, mentions that the king made allocations towards the maintenance of the monks and the nuns. Every morning on behalf of the king an officer was sent to the *viḥāra* to ask after the welfare of the resident monks (Ray, 2008). Such support/patronage may be explained as the king's efforts towards legitimizing his royal power. Similarly, other patrons were involved in the daily activities of the *viḥāra*, as it became the focus of activity for the society. When the *saṅgha* had grown into an influential force in the social life, its original conception no longer applied in its entirety, however, these were never formally invalidated, either. We can speculate that the donors of that period were not entirely indifferent to some of the internal developments of the *saṅgha*, which played a significant part in monastic organization.

According to traditional Buddhist practice, the lay people had little scope to participate in the ritual activities of the *viḥāra* except through the *dāna*. Vinaya mentions that, being donors, the lay people could be listeners during the after-meal talks. However, the *Vajrayāna* boosted the lay people's participation incorporating *pūjā* (worship) as a form of *bhakti*. Though existence of *pūjā* could be traced back to earlier times (Huntington, 2012: 12), and especially to its existence during the

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<sup>29</sup> Cunningham identified *Bhasu viḥāra* with *Po-Shi-Po* mentioned by Hiuen-Tsung, located about six kilometres west of *Mahāsthāngarḥ*.

<sup>30</sup> According to the Google Map, walking from *Pahāṇpur* to *Mahāsthāngarḥ* takes about ten hours, which suggest during the mediaeval period *Pahāṇpur* was out of *Mahāsthāngarḥ* city periphery.

*Mahāyāna* period, *Vajrayāna* gave *pūjā* a new import during the post-Gupta time. A typical *pūjā* involved prayers and invocations, music, incense burning, lustration of the object of veneration, the presentation of offerings (such as flowers, garlands and food). Accommodating all elements of the *pūjā*, Buddhist shrines took on a new direction at this point. Two types of shrine development can be observed in Gupta and later Gupta periods; individual shrines for congressional prayer, and shrine within the *vihāra* for monks. Grandness of these congressional shrines clearly indicate the participation of a large number of lay people.

In *Vajrayāna* tradition *pūjā* soon took centre stage in all activities, and as its consequence the shrine took the central position of the *vihāra*. What was an individual shrine before, detached from the residential *vihāra*, now become the fundamental core of a *saṅgha* and the central shrine of the *mahāvihāra* evolved from this. This also gave lay people, especially the donors, a better chance to access the *vihāra* and participate in regular activities. General lay people, who did not have much wealth like the merchants, could also make other less expensive forms of donation as *dāna* became an integral practice of the *Vajrayāna* movement.

It can be safely assumed that a huge number of lay people followed Buddhism during the post-Gupta period. Hiuen-Tsung found a flourishing condition of Buddhism in Bengal and some *vihāras* had a large number of monks, in places as many as 700.<sup>31</sup> This also suggests that there could be a few thousand lay people around these *vihāra* to support it. This large number of people (both monks and lay people) must have participated in the construction phase of these grand *mahāvihāra*, as working for *Saṅghārāma* was considered noble work for the monks and lay peoples. Confronted with such large number of supporters in the post-Gupta period, the initiators were influenced to think of building grand structures like the *Ānanda*, *Sālban* or *Pabārpur mahāvihāra*.

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<sup>31</sup> In *Puṇḍravardhana*, Hiuen-Tsung observed about 700 monks in *Po-chi-po vihāra* (Beal, 1844: 195).

Artistic trends and available construction technologies directly influenced architecture. *Vāstuśāstra*<sup>32</sup>, which represented the trends of mediaeval Indian architecture, were incorporated in *Varāhamihira's*<sup>33</sup> *Brihatsambhita* in the 6th century AD. Epigraphs of the post-Gupta period reveal that *sutradharas*,<sup>34</sup> architects – a new class of artists, played an important role in the building activity (Misra, 1975: 12). This inscription further claimed that *sutradharas* had knowledge of *vāstu* texts as well as of the practice of architecture. Within the hierarchical set-up amongst artists the *sutradhara* was at its apex (Desap, 1990: 18), which clearly demonstrates the improved position of the architect in the society during the Gupta period onwards. The later Paramara king, Bhoja (c. 1010-1055) in his *Vāstu* text, *Samarangana Sutradhara* (chapter 44) states that the architect (*sthapati*) should be proficient in various subjects such as mathematics, astronomy, astrology, prosody, philosophy, art etc. whereas *Vāstuśāstra* also described mathematical, astronomical, astrological and other aspects of building. So it is not unlikely that the architect of the post-Gupta period had sound knowledge on these aspects. These skilled architects along with other artisan influenced the grand constructions of post-Gupta Bengal. In addition to this there was a large labor force to assist the expert artists in manual work stated before.

Previous discussions identified that the participation of the huge number of monks and large number of lay people played an active role in the construction of large monasteries. As the *vihāra* was independent and economically solvent, it is more likely that most artisans were attached to it. That is why the chief artisan (*sthapati*/ architect) had to work in close association with the *acharya*<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Vāstuśāstra* (science of construction/ architecture) is an ancient doctrine which consists of precepts born out of a traditional view on how the laws of nature affect human dwellings.

<sup>33</sup> *Varāhamihira* (505–587 AD) was an astronomer, mathematician, and astrologer. He is considered to be one of the nine jewels (*navaratnas*) at the court of the legendary ruler *Vikramāditya* (Gupta emperor Chandragupta II *Vikramāditya*).

<sup>34</sup> *Sutradharas* were the chief of artisan in building activity, probably were specialized architects.

<sup>35</sup> The *Acharya* was the head of the *vihāra*. Probably the *acharya* was an intermediary between the architect and the patron in the design and construction phase.

who hired him and to whom he was directly responsible (Desap, 1990: 32). It is more likely that as the skilled artisans, especially architects and sculptures, had to work with the religious *acharya*, his or contemporary religious ideas and practices directly influenced to art and architecture of that period.

With the development of *Vajrayāna* philosophy *bhakti* was gaining a strong position in religious practice, which can be seen from the increase of *bodhisattvas*<sup>36</sup>. Fa-Hien (394-414 AD) mentions the names of *Mañjuśrī*, *Avalokiteśvara*, and the future Buddha *Maitreya*; while Hiuen-Tsung (629-645 AD) refers to the names of *Mañjuśrī*, *Avalokiteśvara*, *Maitreya*, *Padmapāṇi*, *Hariti*, *Ksitigarbha*, *Vaśīṣṭha*, *Sakya Buddha*, *akya Bodhisattva*, and *Yama* together with such deified saints as *Asvaghosa*, *Nagarjuna*, *Asahga*, *Sumedhas* and others. I-Tsing (671-695 AD) mentions the names of *Mañjuśrī*, *Avalokiteśvara*, *Maitreya*, *Amitayus*, *Hariti*, the *Catur-Mahāfajikas*, and *Yama* besides several others. Śāntideva<sup>37</sup> (695-730 AD), in his *Sikṣasamuccaya*, mentions the names of *Akṣobhya* as a *Tathāgata*, *Gaganaganja* as a *Bodhisattva*, *Simhavikrīḍita* as a *Tathāgata*, *Cunda*, *Trisamayaśāstra*, *Marici*, *Simhanada*, *Manjughosa* and many others (Bhattacharyya, 1958: 35). The large number of *bodhisattvas* were worshiped during the post-Gupta period, which must had significant influence in everyday Buddhist practice. This also influenced the shrine architecture, which had to accommodate and represent these *bodhisattvas* and their ideas, as according to *Mahāsaṃghika vinaya* accommodating *bodhisattvas*' images was amongst the prime goals to build any *chaityas* (shrines).<sup>38</sup>

The early Buddhist art of Bharhut (185 to 72 BC), *Sāñchi* (300 BC to 50 AD) and early Amravati (200 BC to 100 AD) was all aniconic. Buddha was never represented in image or human form, but

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<sup>36</sup> Literally *bodhisattva* means either an enlightened (*bodhi*) existence (*sattva*) or an enlightenment-being.

<sup>37</sup> Śāntideva was seventh-century *Mahāyāna* master who is the author of well-known religious poem, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Entering the Path of Enlightenment).

<sup>38</sup> According to *Mahāsaṃghika Vinaya* and Fa-Hien, "Where there is a relic, one speaks of a *stupa*; where there is none, of a *chaitya*. The *chaityas* that mark the places where the Buddha was born, where he attained enlightenment, where he turned the wheel of the law, and where he entered nirvana, or where there is a Bodhisattva image, the caves of *pratyekabuddhas*, or the footprints of the Buddha." (Soper, 1950: 148).

was depicted by means of symbols (Krishan, 1996: 1). But it is interesting to note that even in this early phase *bodhisattvas* were represented in human form. The evolution of Buddhist art from its aniconic to iconic stage did not take a long time; rather, in early *Theravāda* Buddhism (as early as first century AD) Buddha was being represented in human form. Subsequently in *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhism image as *pūjā* became a prime practice, the number of Buddhist images increased rapidly, which was stated before.

In *Mahāyāna* iconography, there were three protective deities surrounding the Buddha (Orzech et al., 2010: 859). Each of them symbolized one of the Buddha's virtues; *Mañjuśrī* (the manifestation of all the Buddhas' wisdom), *Avalokiteśvara* (the manifestation of all the Buddhas' compassion) and *Vajrapāṇi* (the manifestation of all the Buddhas' power). In earlier form these protective deities were represented behind the Buddha as his companions, but later they gained in importance and individual images were established to signify them. Perhaps evolution of early cruciform shrine, during the Gupta period, was begun to accommodate these protective deities. This process did not stop there; shrines had to accommodate an increasing number of images as over time *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* adopted more *bodhisattvas*.

From the social point of view, in the meantime, an evolving hierarchy of attendees could be identified in any shrine. As many merchants and other large-scale donors contributed significantly to the *saṅgha*, it could be assumed that in return they were expecting priority in the shrine. If that was indeed the case then there were clearly at least three tiers of people in the shrine procession: the monks, large donors and general lay people. According to the Buddhist hierarchy, monks were always respected more than any lay people<sup>39</sup> which gave these donors only scope to sit after the monk had done so in the shrine. Traditionally monks had direct access to the image chamber as they had to perform the rituals, new spaces were needed for these donors who were expecting a

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<sup>39</sup> It is restricted for any monk to bow to any lay person and monastic hierarchy is generally embodied by a bow (Reinders, 1997: 248).



better position than the lay people. Perhaps for this reason the new tiered *mandapa* was introduced into Buddhist shrine architecture during the Gupta period and it is reasonable to believe that for the laity the outside of the shrine was designated for *pradakshina*. Further influences of *bhakti* helped people to get closer to the Buddha or at least to view the image at close range, which was termed as *darshan*.<sup>40</sup> In the later Gupta period when general people were also contributing towards the *saṅgha* through small forms of *dāna* and *bhakti* had already penetrate Buddhism as *pūjā* – which later took prime position in the *Vajrayāna* tradition, the laity's desire to participate in the shrine could no longer be overlooked by the religious hierarchy. As a result, *pradakshina* now become an integral part of the shrine and was built as a corridor rather like the previous open platform.

It is noteworthy that from the 7th century AD onwards the Buddhist *Vajrayāna* pantheon became elaborate and well-classified with multiplicity of gods and goddesses - *Dhyāni* Buddhas and their families (*kulas*), female counterparts and guardians of gates, each with symbol and color (Bhattacharyya, 1958: 31-41). These probably influenced the carry out of experiments during the post-Gupta period accommodating many *bodhisattvas* in the cruciform shrines; some earlier phases of *Ānanda*, *Bhojā* and *Sāmban* *vihāra* shrine represented these experiments. Though *Vajrayāna* pantheon were elaborated with many *bodhisattvas*, their basic idea revolves around the theory of the five *Dhyāni* (meditating) Buddhas. According to this belief, the world is composed of five cosmic elements or *Skandhas*, which are *Rūpa* (form), *Vedanā* (sensation), *Samjñā* (name), *Sanṣkāra* (conformation) and *Vijñāna* (consciousness). These elements are eternal cosmic forces and are without a beginning or an end. Deified in *Vajrayāna* as the five *Dhyāni* Buddhas, in the course of time they were regarded as the five primordial gods responsible for this diversified creation (Bhattacharyya, 1958: 7), which are *Vairocana*, *Akṣobhya*, *Amitābha*, *Ratnasambhava*, *Amoghasiddhi*.

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<sup>40</sup> *Darshan* or viewing is a well-known religious traditions which remains a fundamental element of Buddhist lay practice even to the present day. *Darshan* can be part of a larger ritual or ceremony or a practice in its own right.

Another grand conception of the *Vajrayāna* Buddhism is the theory of the highest god *Vajradhāra* or *Ādibuddha*, *Vairocana* is considered as *Ādibuddha*. And *Ādibuddha* is the embodiment of *Śūnya* to whom even the *Dhyāni* Buddhas owe their origin. In general *Śūnyatā* can be translated as emptiness, openness, thusness, etc. It has been said in the *Adhyavajra saṃgrah*, "*Śūnyatā*, which is firm, substantial, indivisible, impenetrable, incapable of being burnt and imperishable, is called the *Vajra*" (Ghosh, 1997: 32).<sup>41</sup> *Vajra* is the ultimate state of enlightenment in the *Vajrayāna* thought (Phuoc, 2010: 292).

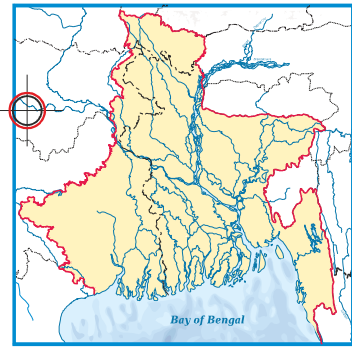
In the plethora of post-Gupta images the *Dhyāni Buddha* concept allowed their grouping into five distinct sets of images. According to the five-Buddha *mandala* the Buddhas are arranged as *Ādibuddha* in the centre and other four in a cardinal arrangement: *Akṣobhya* (east), *Amitābha* (west), *Amoghasiddhi* (north) and *Ratnasambhava* (south). Impact of this *Dhyāni* Buddha concept towards architecture was dramatic as it gave rise to the mature cruciform shrine removing the confusion of many deities. In this new form *Ādibuddha* was represented as central *Śūnya* space and four other Buddhas surrounded it with almost equal priority. Cruciform layer of *Sālban vihāra* shrine probably denotes the earlier form of this style, where the central *Śūnya* was symbolized as inaccessible mass. Later central shrine of *Pahārpur mahāvihāra* shows more meaningful symbolic representation of *Śūnya* as an inaccessible void space. This fell in place with the three-tier Buddhist cosmology of *kāmadhātu*, *rupadhātu* and *arupadhātu*, where *kāmadhātu* represents the world of desire, *rupadhātu* the world of ordinary form or physical manifestation, and *arupadhātu* the world of formless or highest existence (Behrendt, 2004: 203). *Kāmadhātu* corresponded to the platforms and *pradakṣhina path*, *rupadhātu* the four *Dhyāni* Buddhas and *arupadhātu* the central void space.

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<sup>41</sup> *Adhyavajra saṃgrah* is a *Vajrayāna* text written in about eight century AD.



Figure 5.1(a)



Location

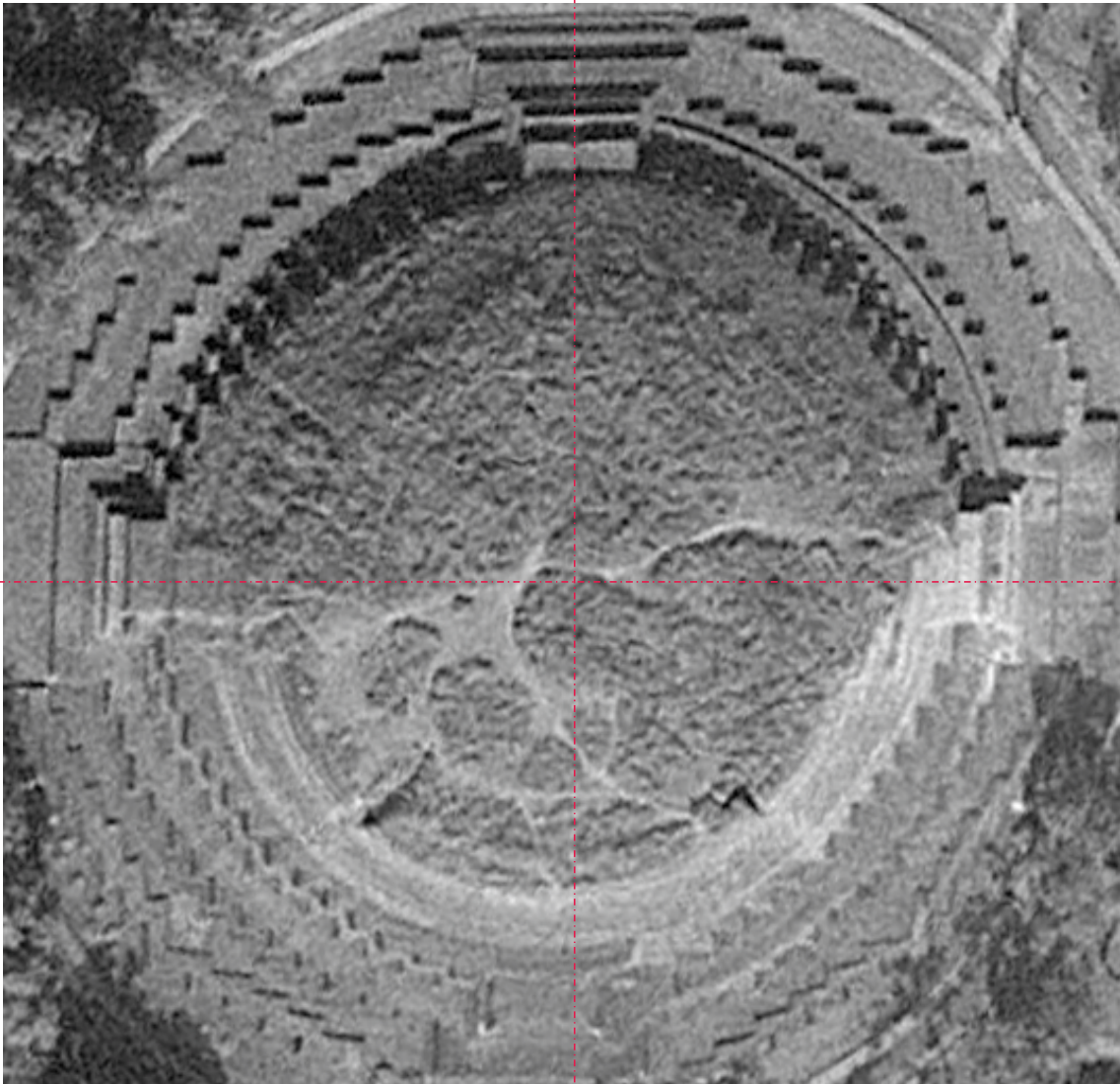


Figure 5.1(b)

### Figure 5.1: Archaeological remains of *Nandangaṛh*, North Bihar

Figure 5.1(a): View of the mound of *Nandangaṛh*

Photographed by Leeuw (Leeuw, J. E. v. L.-d:1956, Fig-1)

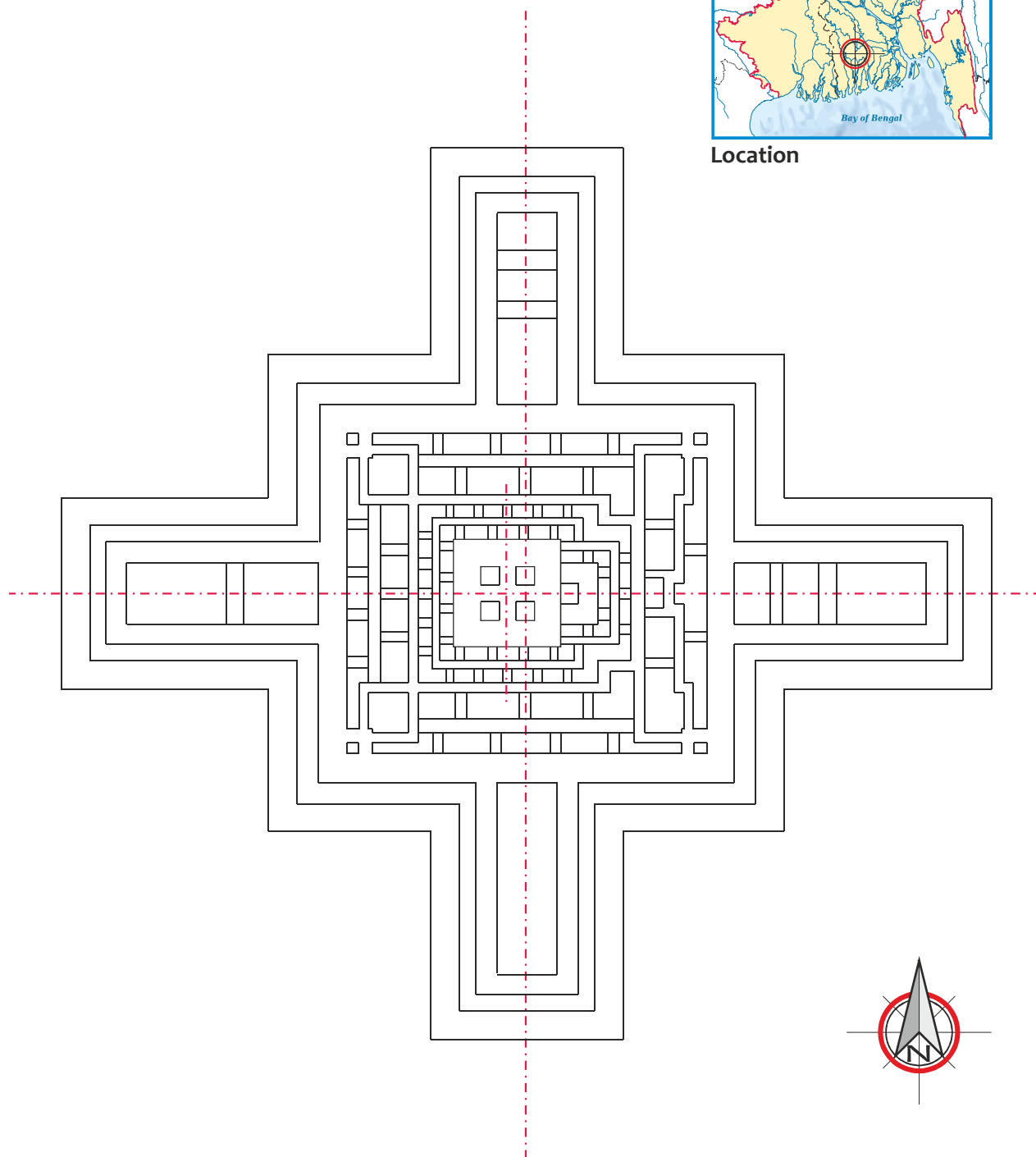
Figure 5.1(b): Satellite view of *Nandangaṛh*

Source: Google maps

**LOCATED AT**  
 Bharat Bhayana  
 Kesabpur, Jessore,  
 Bangladesh



**Location**

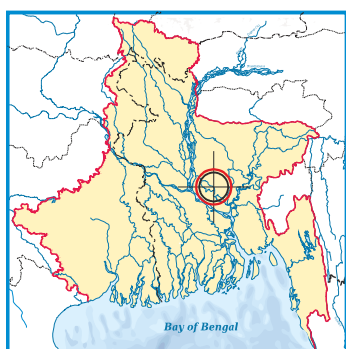


**Figure 5.2:** Archaeological layout of *Bharat Bhayana*

**Plan redrawn by:** author, based on archaeological plan drawn by Md. Jahander Ali

**Collected from:** Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh





### Location

#### LOCATED AT

northeast corner of Savar town  
(18km north of Dhaka metropolitan city)  
Savar, Dhaka  
Bangladesh

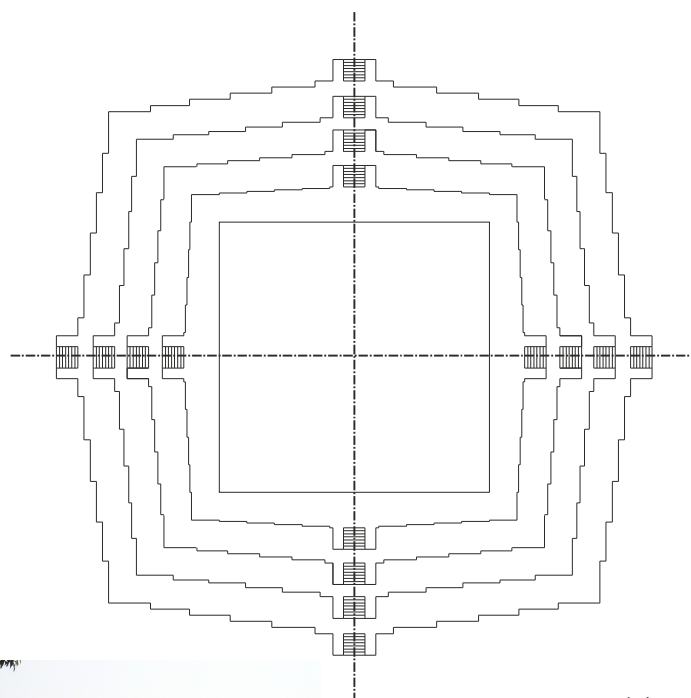


Figure 5.3(a)



Figure 5.3(b)



Figure 5.3(c)

### Figure 5.3: Harish Chandra Rājār Dhībī

Figure 5.3(a): Layout of Bharat Bhayna

Figure 5.3(b): Photograph 01

Figure 5.3(c): Photograph 02

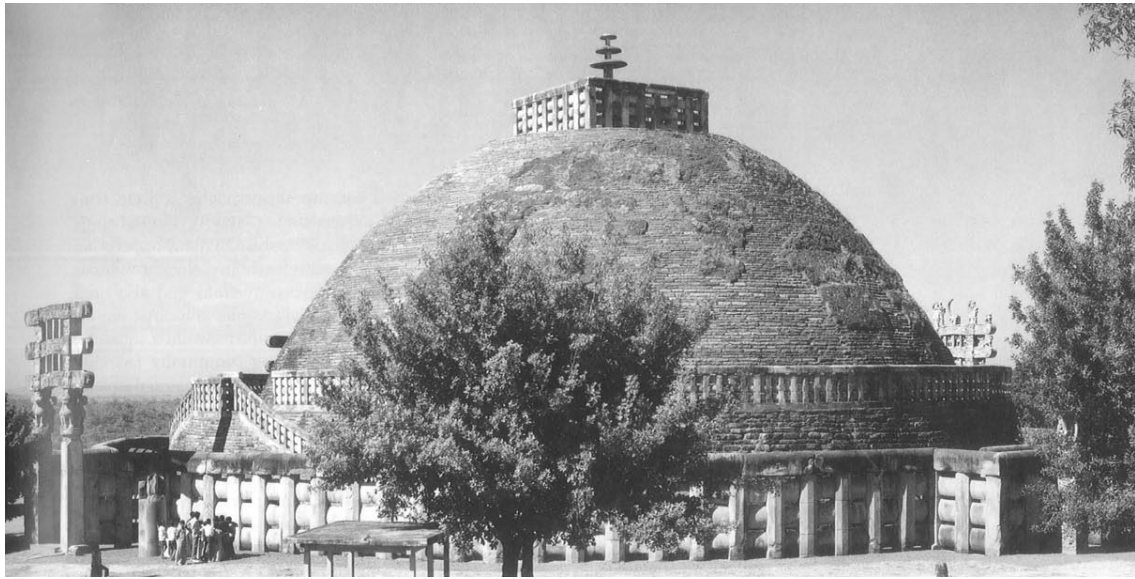


Figure 5.4(a)

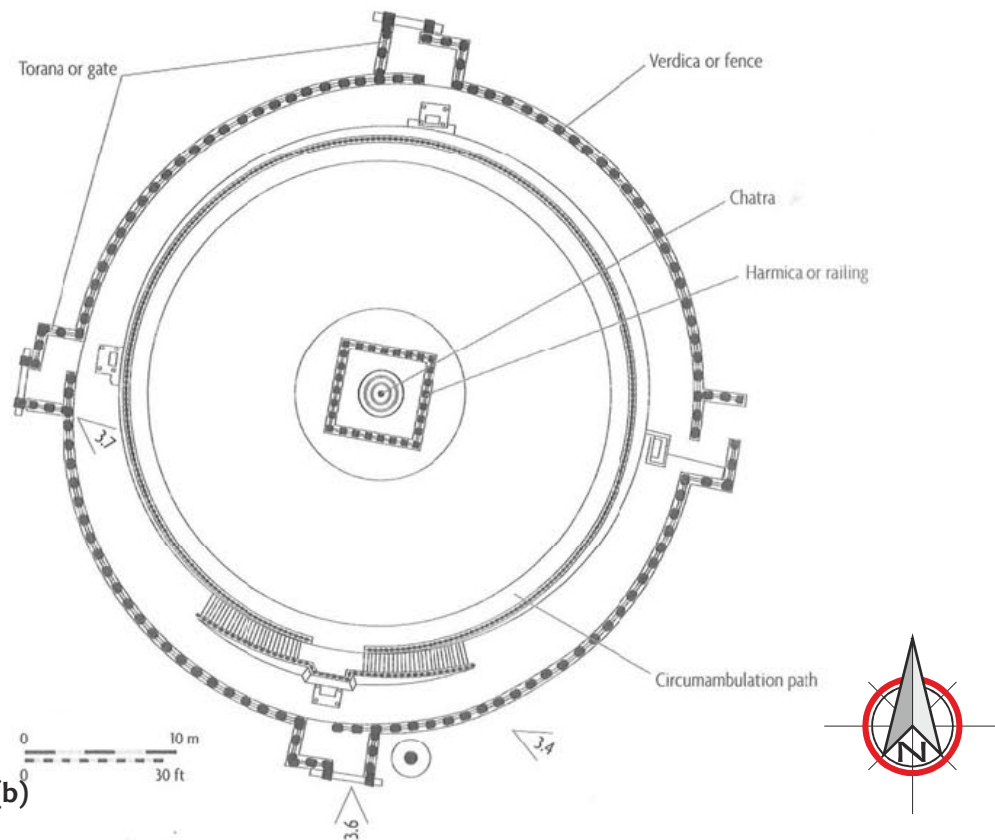


Figure 5.4(b)

### Figure 5.4: Great stūpa, Sāñchī

Figure 5.3(a): View of the Great stūpa

Figure 5.3(b): Plan

Source:



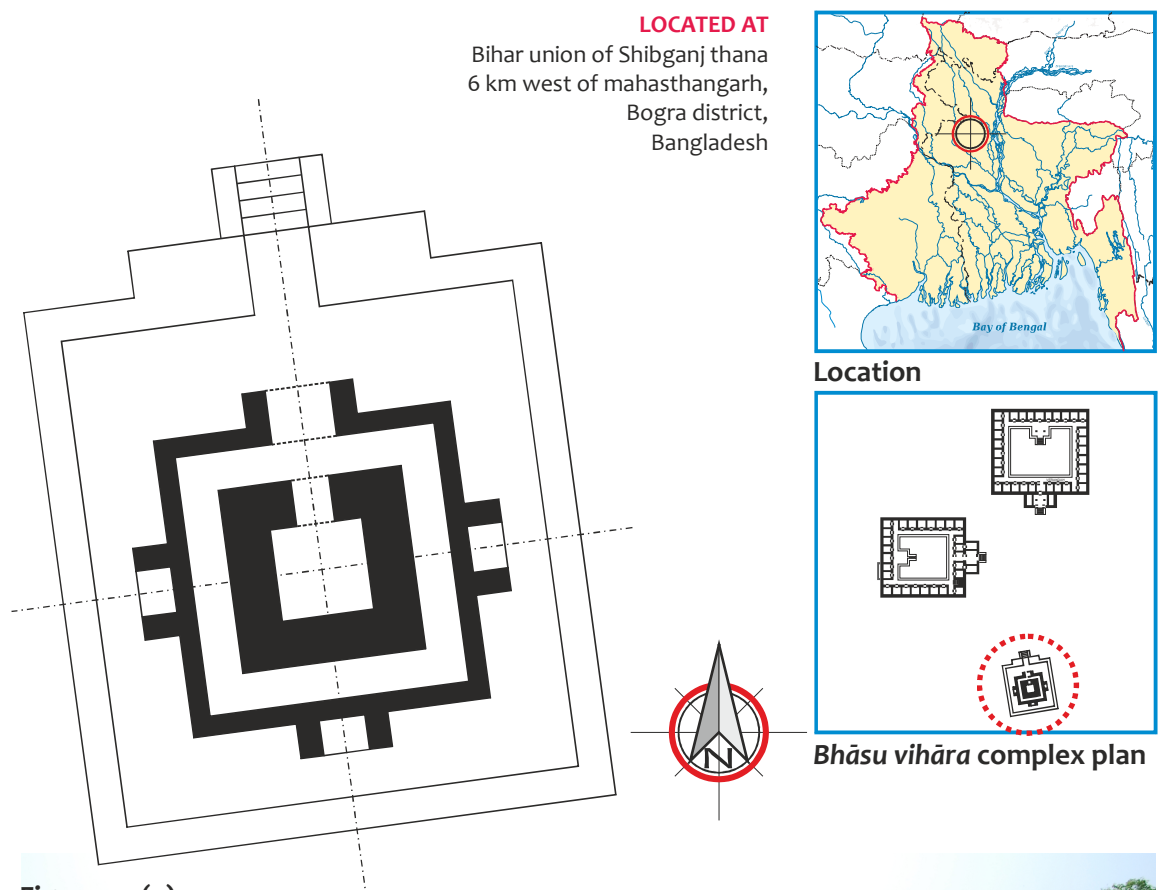


Figure 5.5(a)



Figure 5.5(b)

Figure 5.5: *Bhāsu vihāra* Temple no 1

Figure 5.5(a): Plan of *Bhāsu vihāra* Temple no 1

Figure 5.5(b): Showing *garbhagriha* and *pradakshina* path

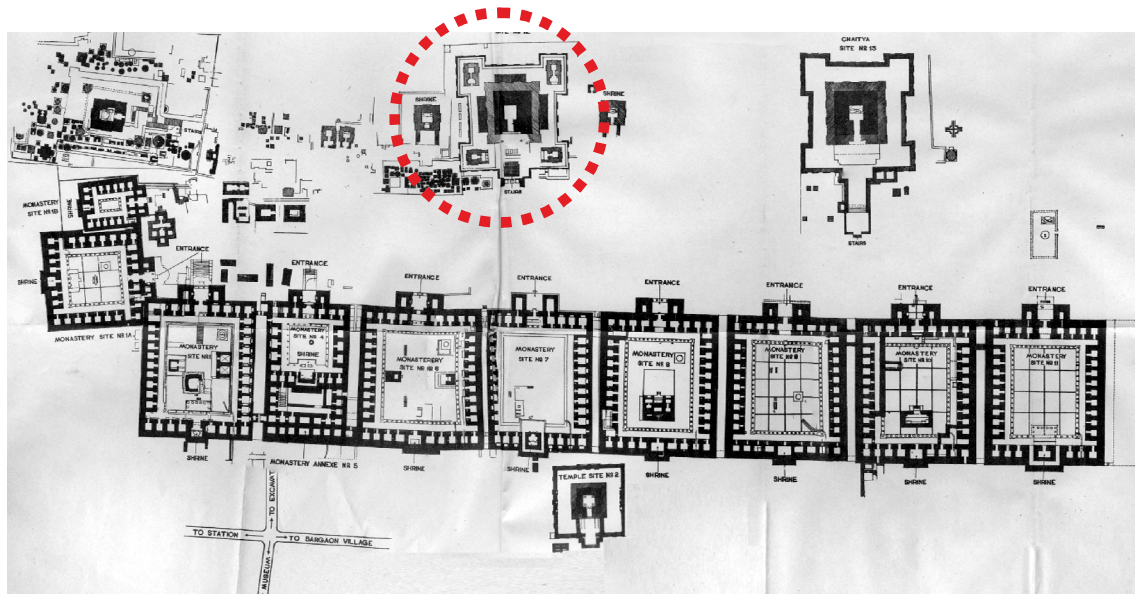


Figure 5.6(a)

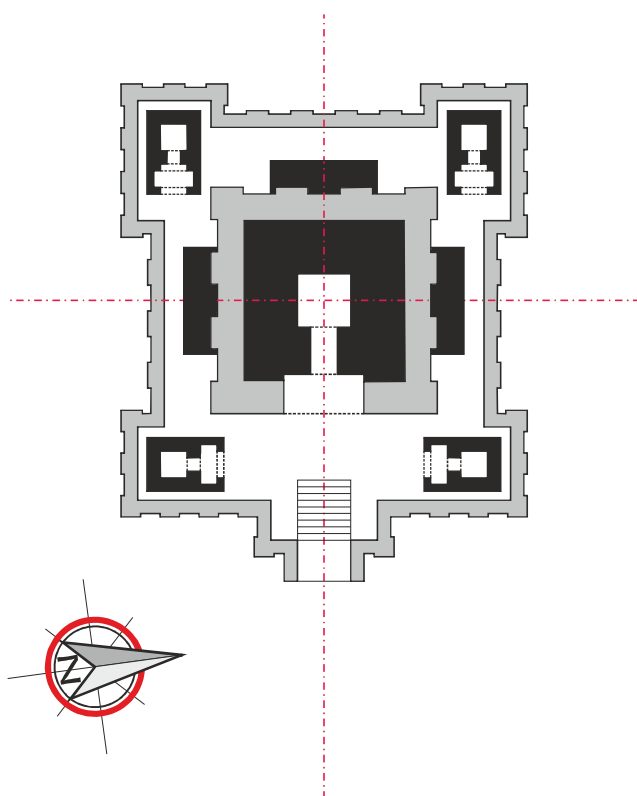


Figure 5.6(b)



#### Location

#### LOCATED AT

Nalanda  
District Nalanda  
Bihar, India

Figure 5.6: Nālandā mahāvihāra Stūpa site 13

Figure 5.6(a): Archaeological plan of Nālandā mahāvihāra

Figure 5.6(b): Plan of Nālandā mahāvihāra Stūpa site 13

Source: Expression of Interest & prequalification documents: Architectural design competition for Nalanda University campus, Nalanda University



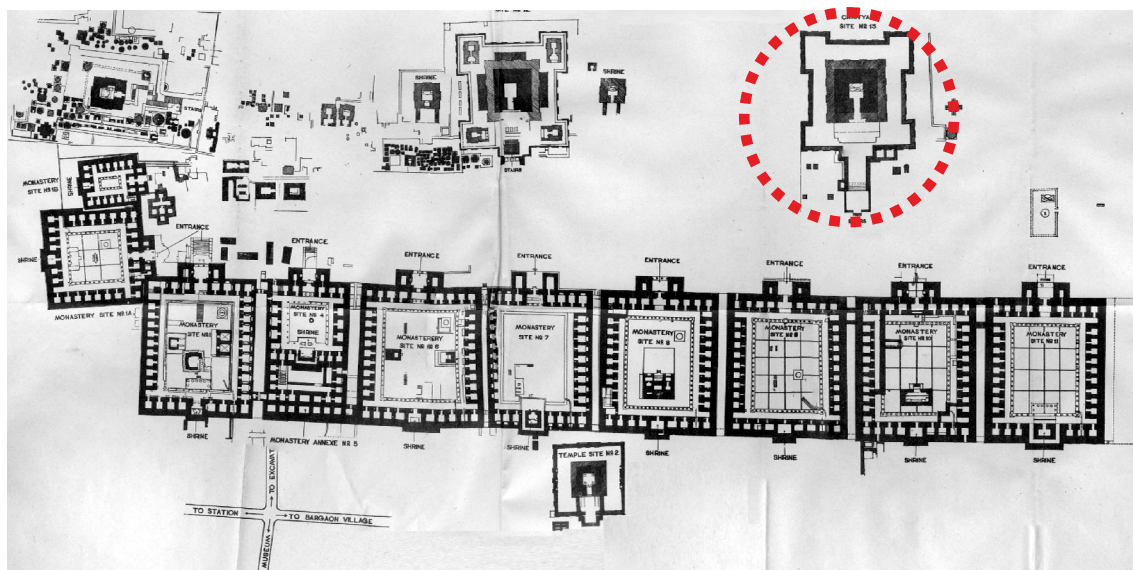


Figure 5.7(a)

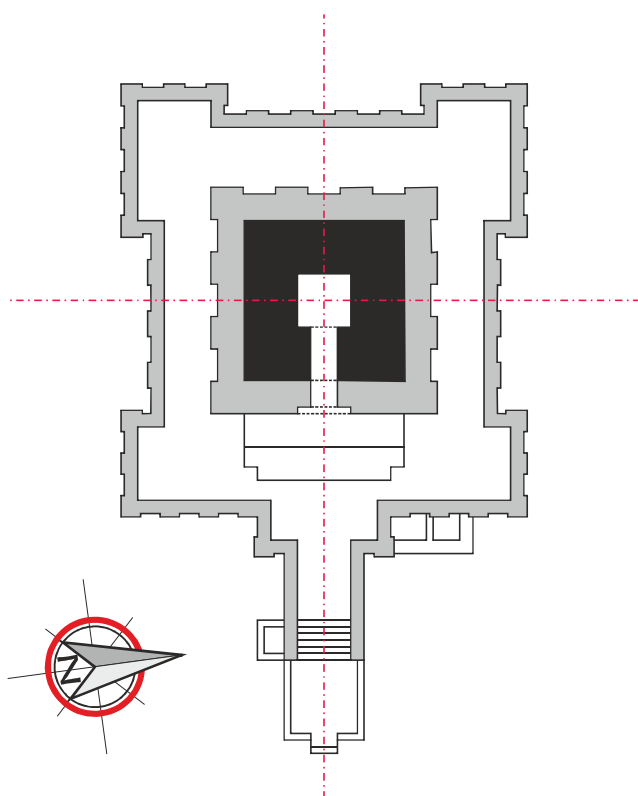


Figure 5.7(b)



#### Location

**LOCATED AT**  
Nalanda  
District Nalanda  
Bihar, India

Figure 5.6: Nālandā mahāvihāra Stūpa site 12

Figure 5.7(a): Archaeological plan of Nālandā mahāvihāra

Figure 5.7(b): Plan of Nālandā mahāvihāra Stūpa site 12

Source: Expression of Interest & prequalification documents: Architectural design competition for Nalanda University campus, Nalanda University



Figure 5.8(a)

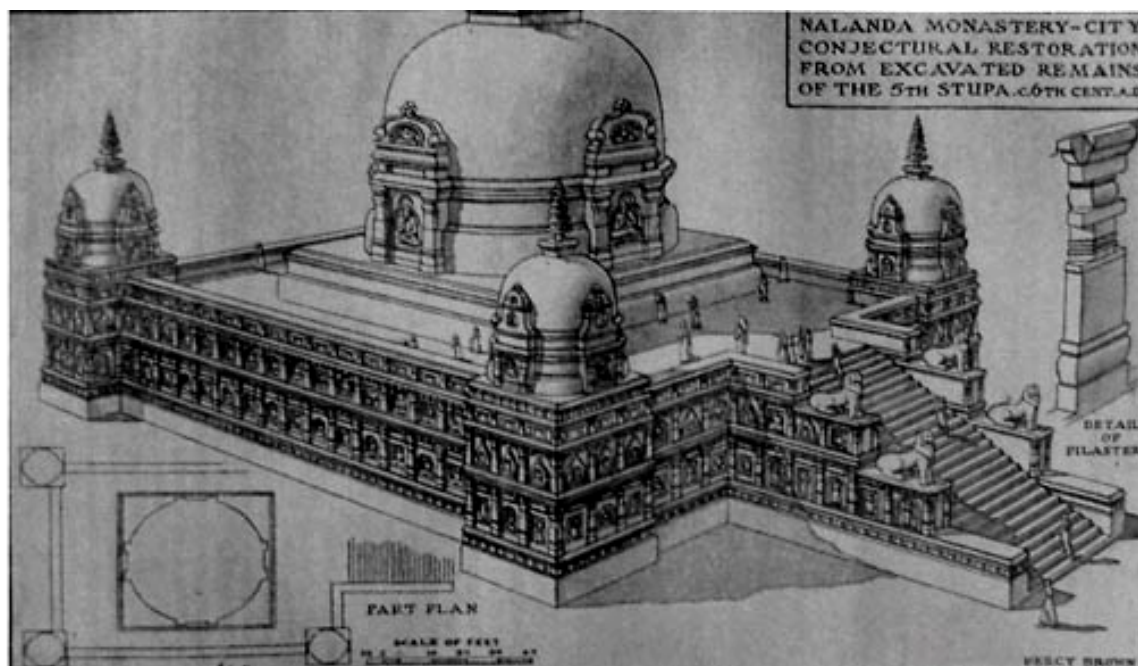


Figure 5.8(b)

### Figure 5.8: Nālandā mahāvihāra Stūpa site 3

Figure 5.8(a): View of Nālandā mahāvihāra Stūpa site 3, Source: Google Image

Figure 5.8(b): Conjectural model of Nālandā mahāvihāra Stūpa site 3 by Archaeological Survey of India



Figure 5.9(a)

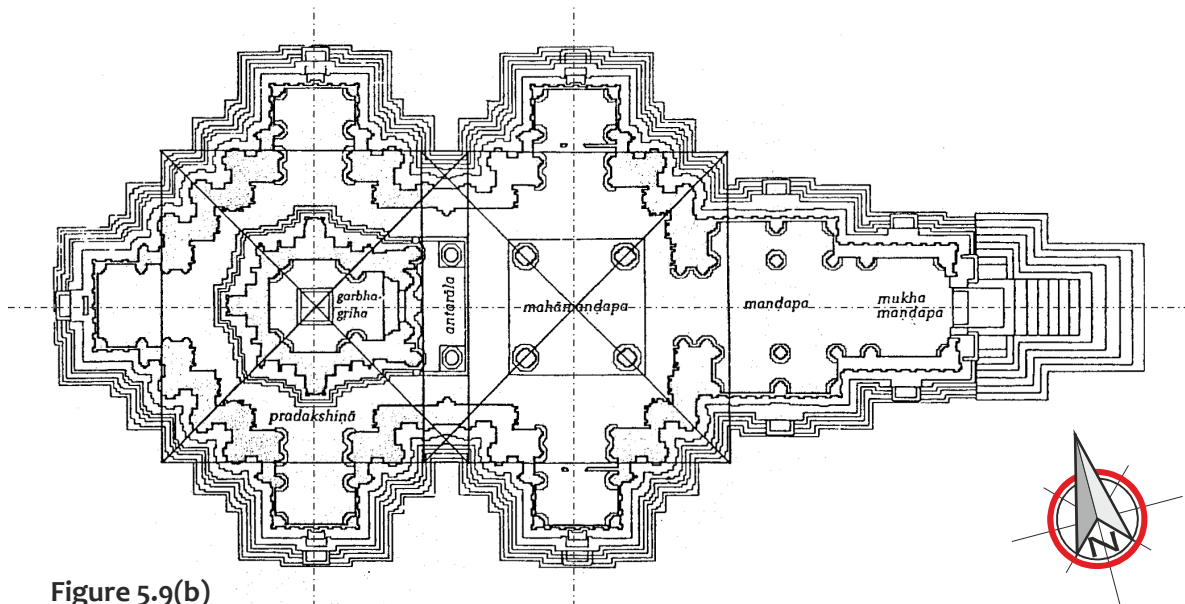


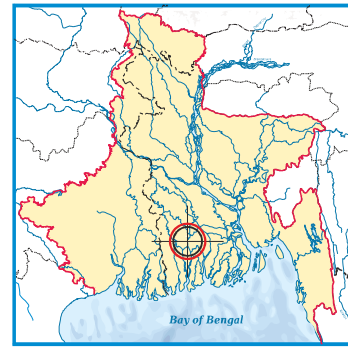
Figure 5.9(b)

### Figure 5.9: Lakshmana Temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh

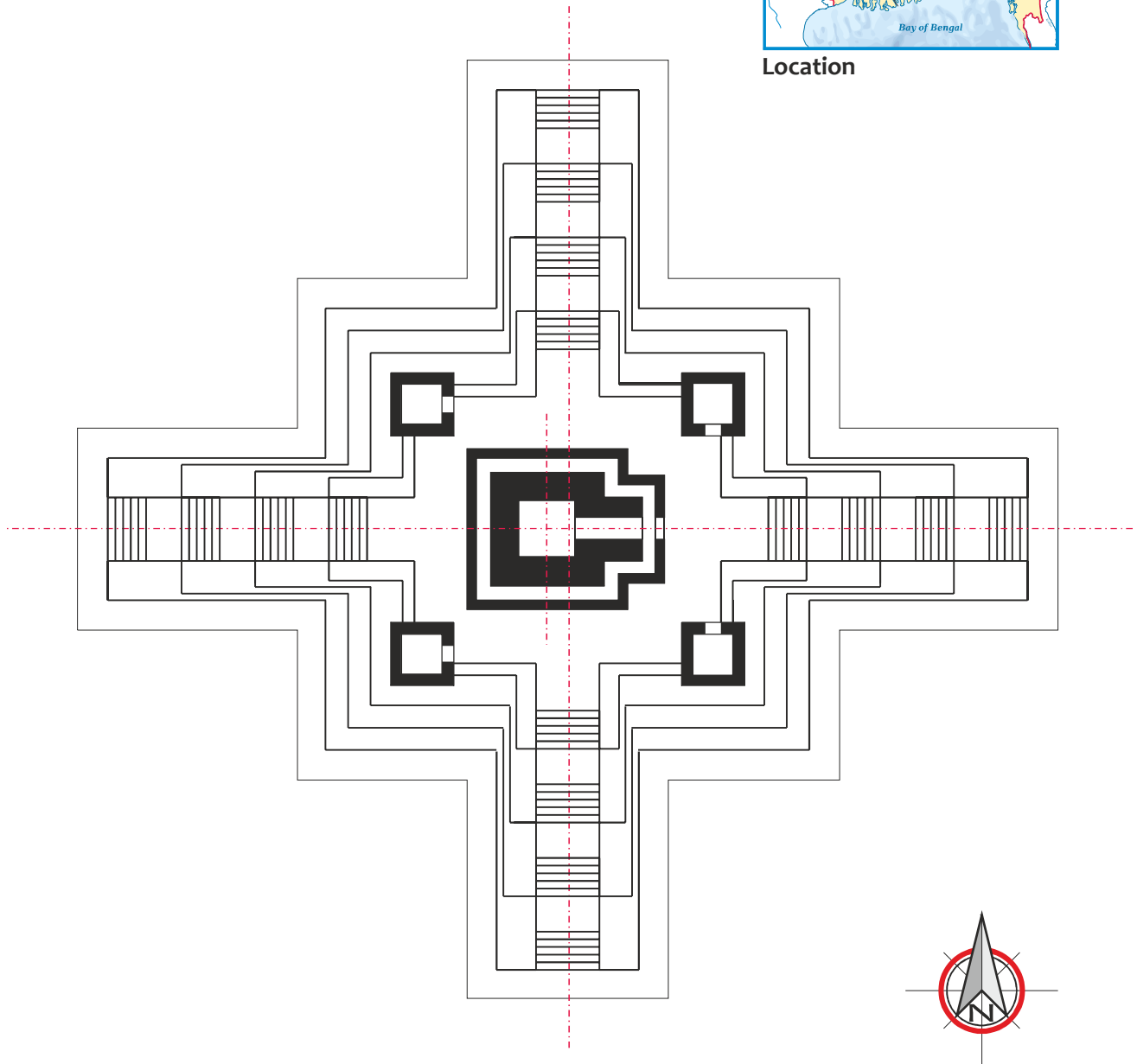
Figure 5.9(a): Southern view, Source: Google Image

Figure 5.9(b): Plan (after ASI).

**LOCATED AT**  
Bharat Bhayana  
Kesabpur, Jessore,  
Bangladesh



**Location**

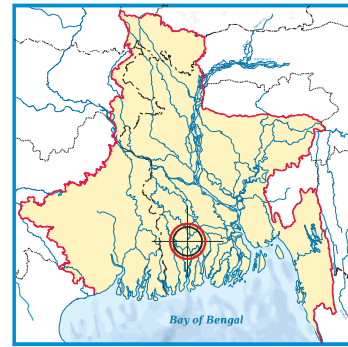


**Figure 5.10:** Conjectural architectural plan of *Bharat Bhayana*

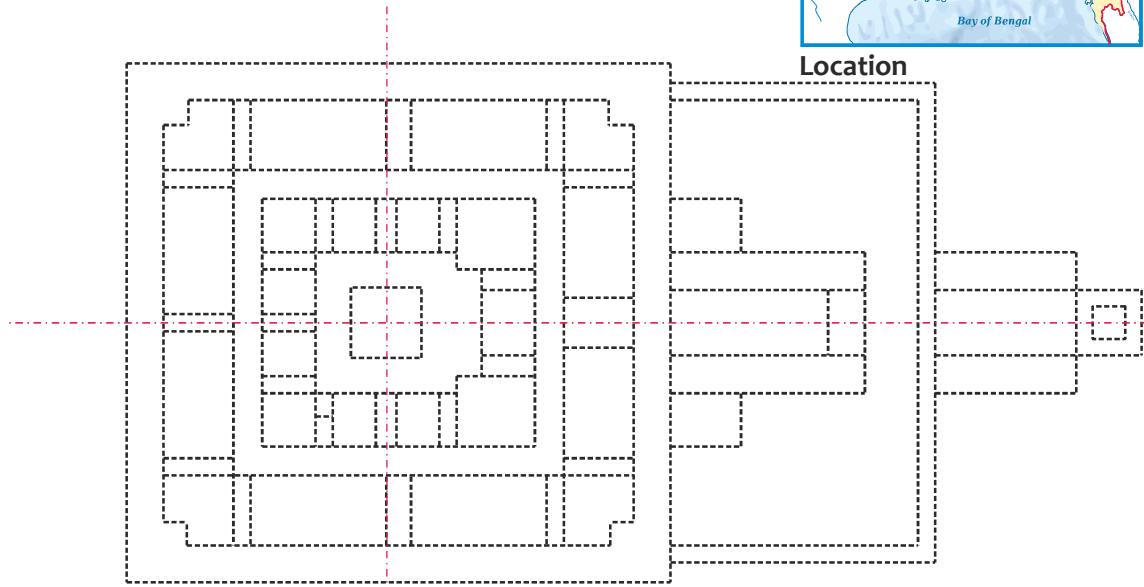
Architectural plan of *Bharat Bhayana* proposed by author, based on archaeological plan drawn by Md. Jahander Ali, Department of Archaeology Bangladesh



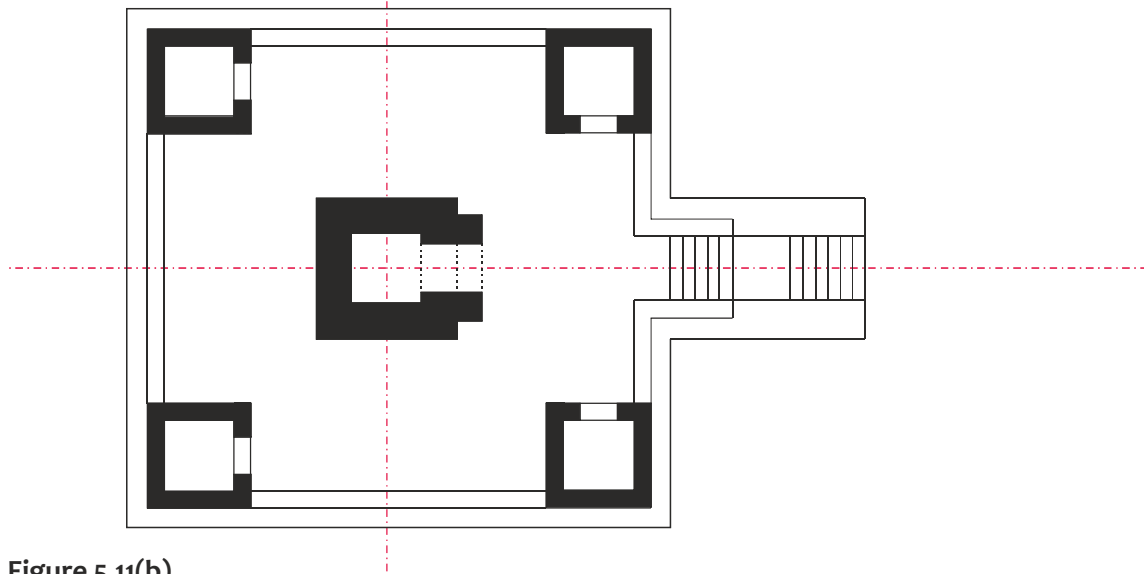
**LOCATED AT**  
Damdam Piresthan Dhibi  
Monirampur, Jessore,  
Bangladesh



**Location**



**Figure 5.11(a)**

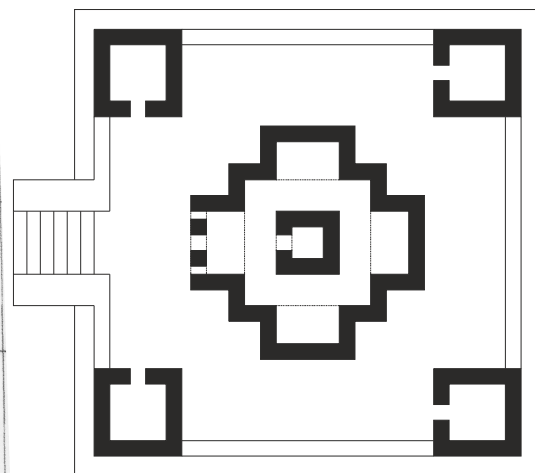
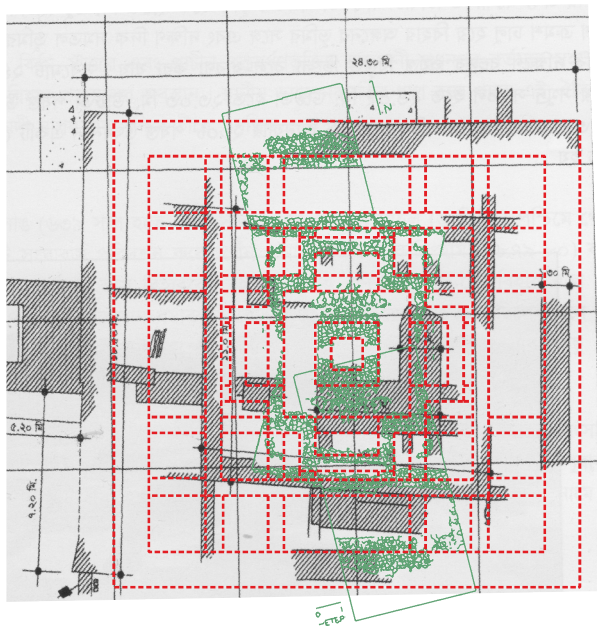
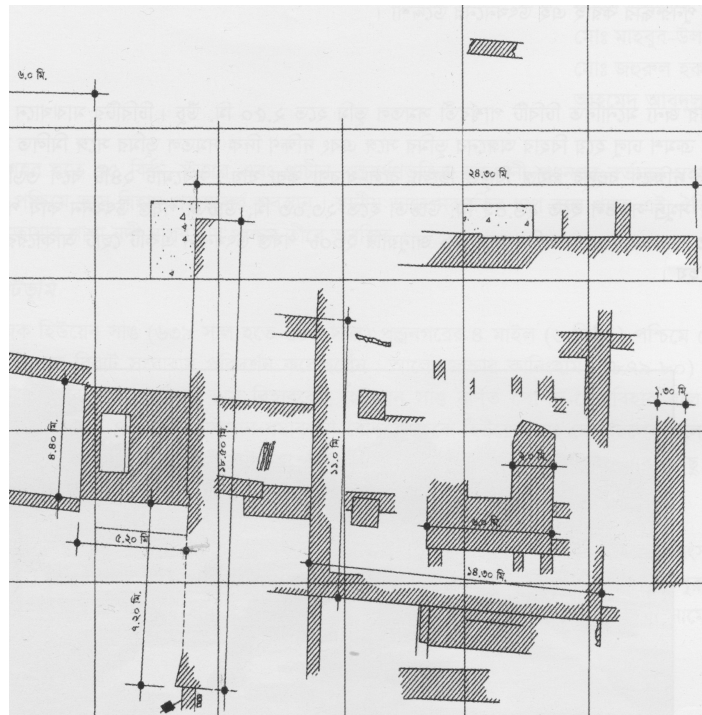
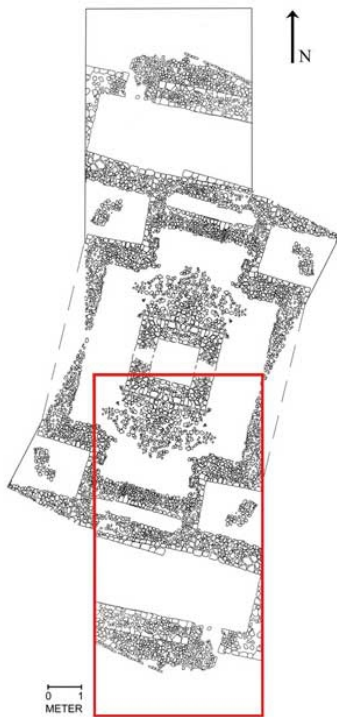


**Figure 5.11(b)**

**Figure 5.11:** Conjectural architectural ground plan of *Damdam Pireṣṭhan Dhibī*

**Figure 5.11(a):** Archaeological layout (Source: Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh)

**Figure 5.11(b):** Proposed architectural plan



**Figure 5.12:** Conjectural architectural plan of Bhāsu vihāra Temple 2

**Figure 5.12(a):** proposed by Smith (Smith et al., 2004) after partial excavation.

**Figure 5.12(b):** excavation report presented by Alam (Alam et al., 2008a: p. 16 figure 2.1).

**Figure 5.12 (c) :** conjectural excavation layout by superimposing Smith's plan over Alam's excavation layout.

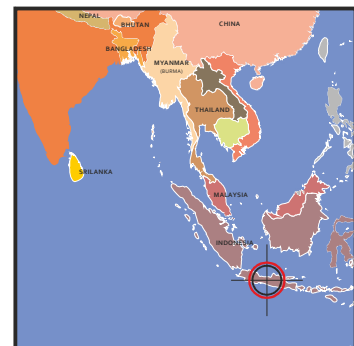
**Figure 5.12(d):** Proposed conjectural architectural plan



Figure 5.13(a)



Figure 5.13(b)



#### Location

##### LOCATED AT

Bugisan village,  
Prambanan district,  
Central Java, Indonesia

Figure 5.13: Candi Mendut, Java

Figure 5.13(a): Photograph 1, Source: [www.art-and-archaeology.com](http://www.art-and-archaeology.com)

Figure 5.12(b): Photograph 2





Figure 5.14(a)

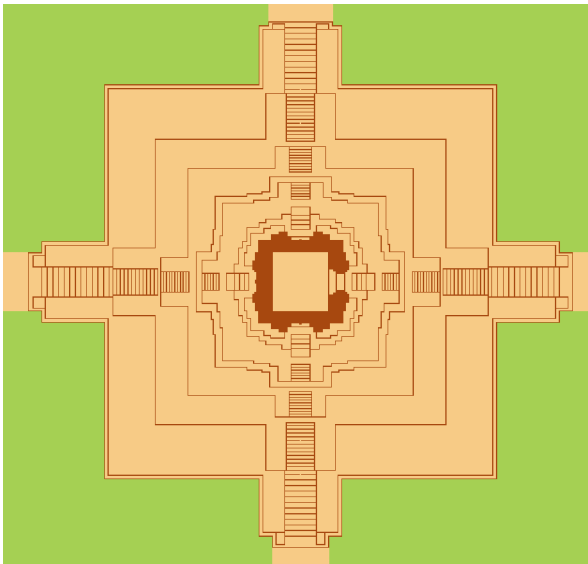


Figure 5.14(b)



Figure 5.14(c)

#### Figure 5.14: Baksei Chamkrong, Cambodia

Figure 5.14(a): Perspective view

Figure 5.14(b): Plan

Figure 5.14 (c): View of the entry approach





Figure 5.15(a)

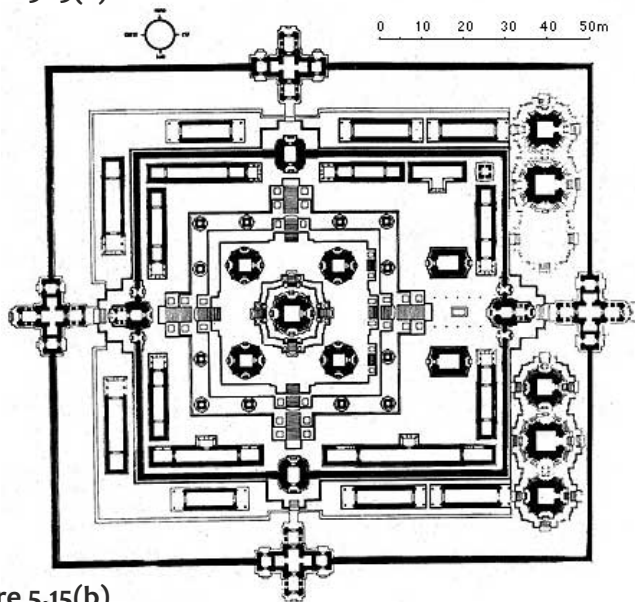


Figure 5.15(b)



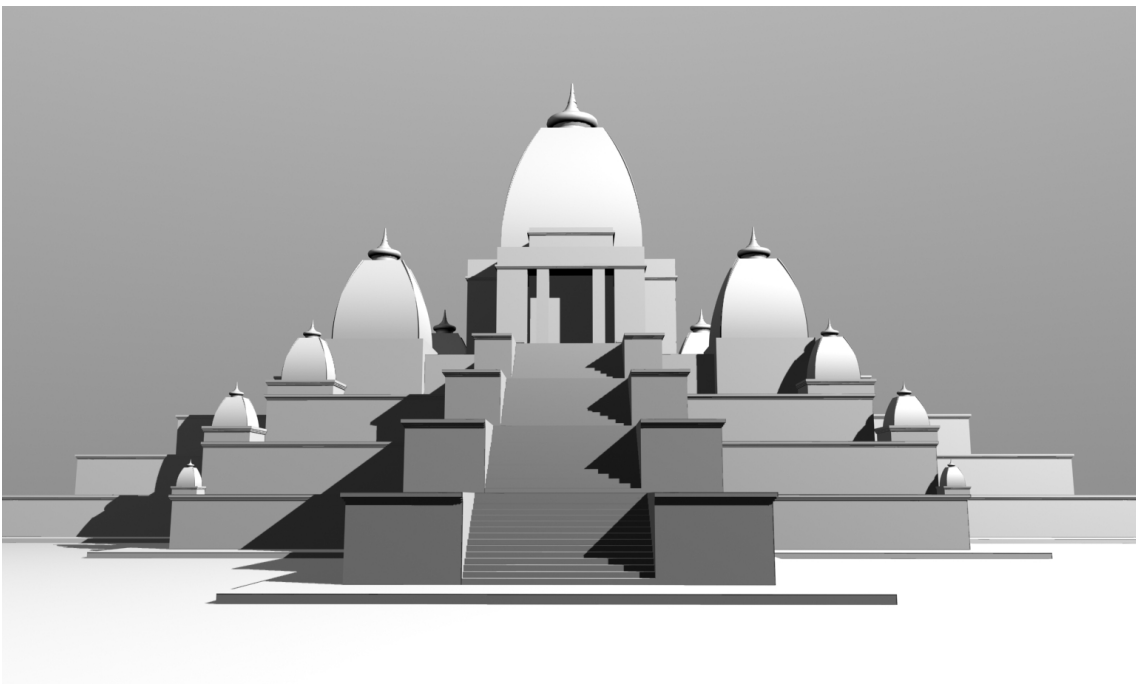
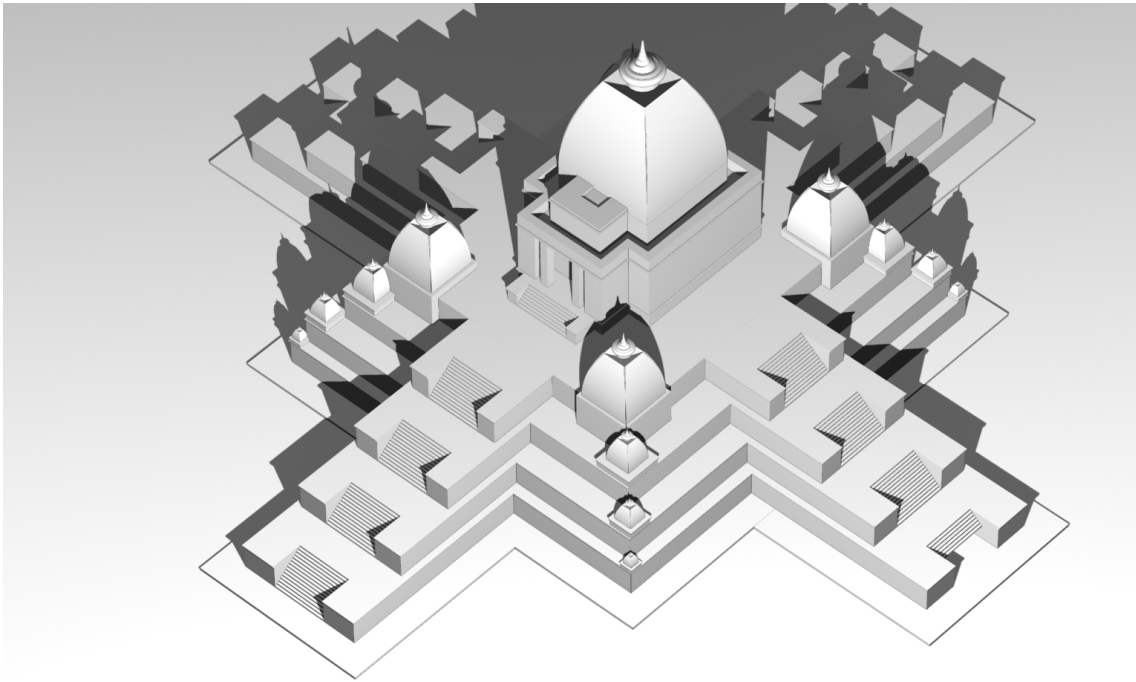
Figure 5.15(c)

### Figure 5.15: Pre Rup Temple, Cambodia

Figure 5.15(a): Birds eye view

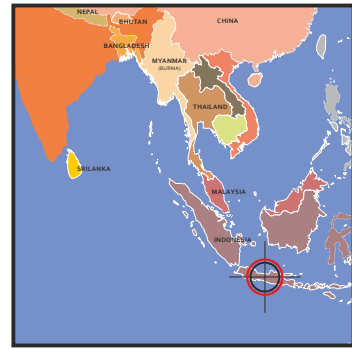
Figure 5.15(b): Plan

Figure 5.15 (c) : View of the entry approach



**Figure 5.16:** Conjectural architectural form of *Bharat Bhayna*





#### Location

#### LOCATED AT

Bugisan village,  
Prambanan district,  
Central Java, Indonesia



**Figure 5.17:** Interior of Candi Mendut, Java

Photograph of the interior (Source: [historic-relics-indonesia.blogspot.com](http://historic-relics-indonesia.blogspot.com))



Figure 5.18(a)



Figure 5.18(b)

**LOCATED AT**  
Deogarh,  
Jhansi District  
Uttar Pradesh, India



Location

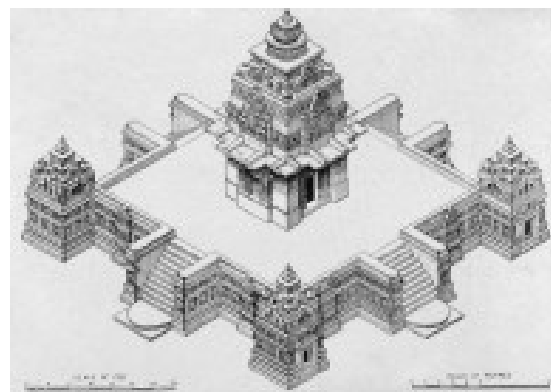


Figure 5.18(c)

**Figure 5.18:** *Dasavatara* Temple - Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh

Figure 5.18(a): Photograph 1 (Source: Saurabh Saxena@picasaweb)

Figure 5.18(b): Photograph 2 (Source: [www.skyscrapercity.com](http://www.skyscrapercity.com))

Figure 5.18 (c) : The Isometric reconstruction by Vats (Source: Lubotsky A. :1992, Fig-2)

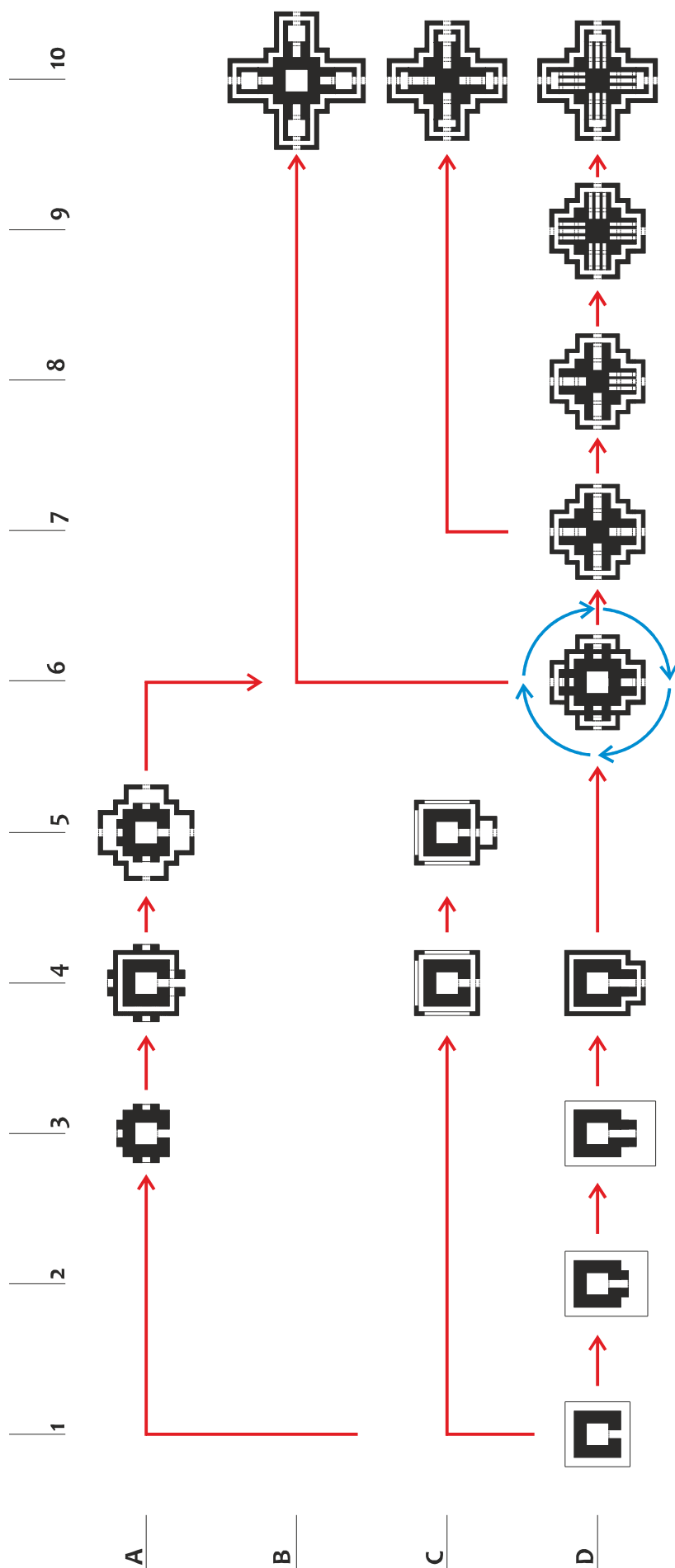
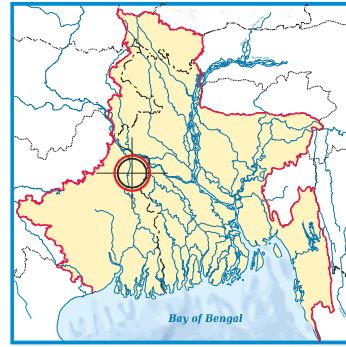


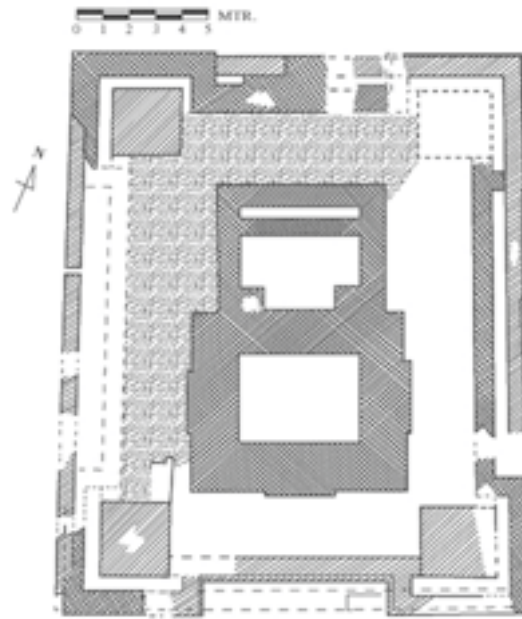
Figure 5.19: Development of main shrine



#### Location

#### LOCATED AT

Karna Subarna,  
Murshidabad,  
West Bengal, India



**Figure 5.20:** *Pañchayatana shrine at Karṇasuvarṇa in Murshidabad*

Archaeological layout (Source: Banglapedia, [www.banglapedia.org](http://www.banglapedia.org))

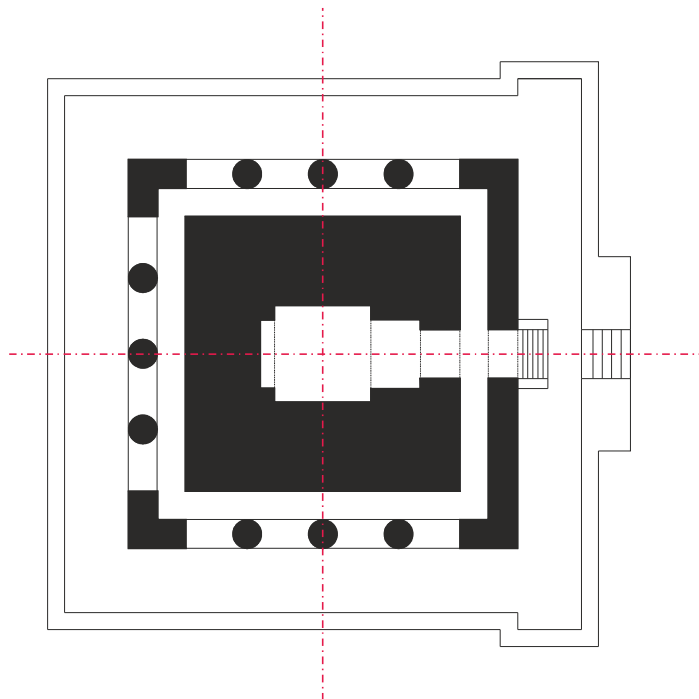


Figure 5.21(a)



#### Location

#### LOCATED AT

Salban vihara  
near Kotbari area,  
Comilla,  
Bangladesh

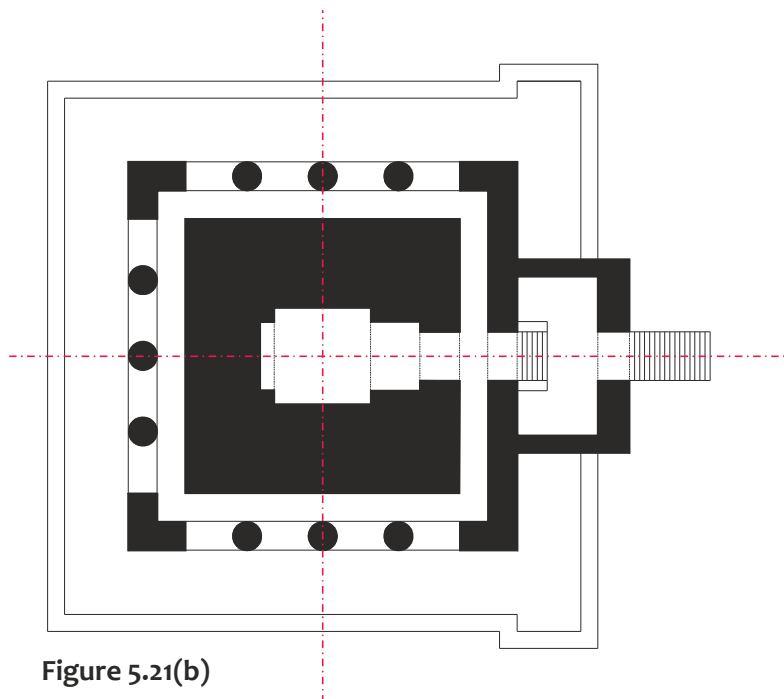
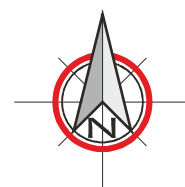


Figure 5.21(b)



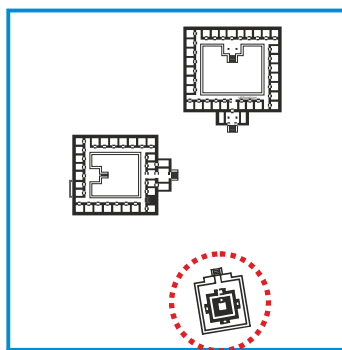
#### Figure 5.21: Temple at north-eastern corner of Sālban vihāra

Figure 5.21(a): Showing first construction phase

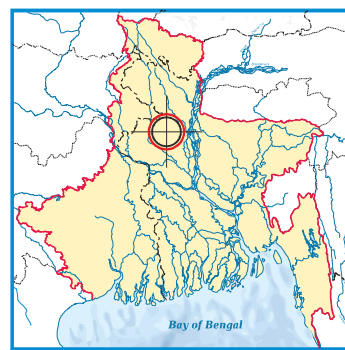
Figure 5.21(b): Showing second construction phase



**LOCATED AT**  
 Bihar union of Shibganj thana  
 6 km west of mahasthangarh,  
 Bogra district,  
 Bangladesh



**Bhāsu vihāra complex plan**



**Location**



**Figure 5.22:** View of the *Bhāsu vihāra* Temple no 1

Showing niches on the outer wall of *pradakshina* path



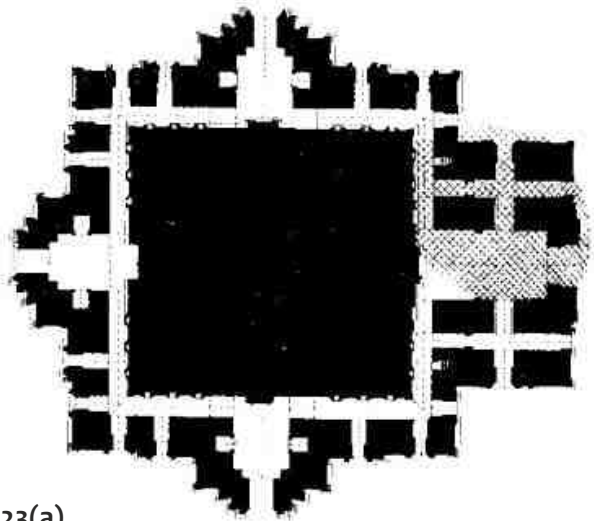


Figure 5.23(a)

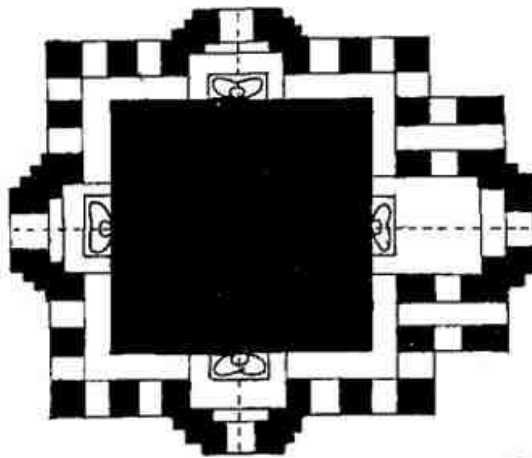


Figure 5.23(b)

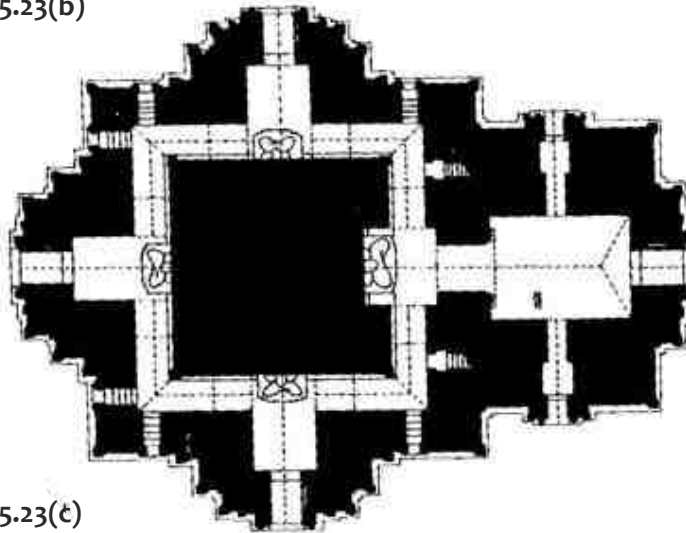


Figure 5.23(c)



#### Location

##### LOCATED AT

**Pyathadar Temple**  
West of Minnanthu Village  
Minnanthu  
Myanmar

**Htilominlo Temple**  
South of Bagan Nyaung-U Main  
Road  
Old Bagan  
Myanmar

**Thitsawadi Temple**  
West of West Pwasaw Village  
West Pwasaw  
Myanmar

#### Figure 5.32: Bagan Temples

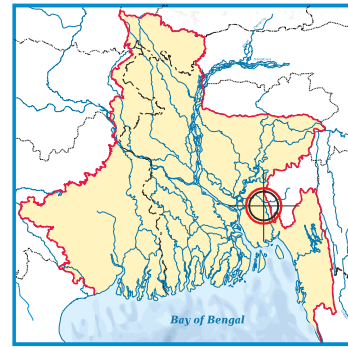
Figure 5.23(a): Pyathadar Temple (12th century AD)

Figure 5.23(b): Htilominlo Temple (AD 1218)

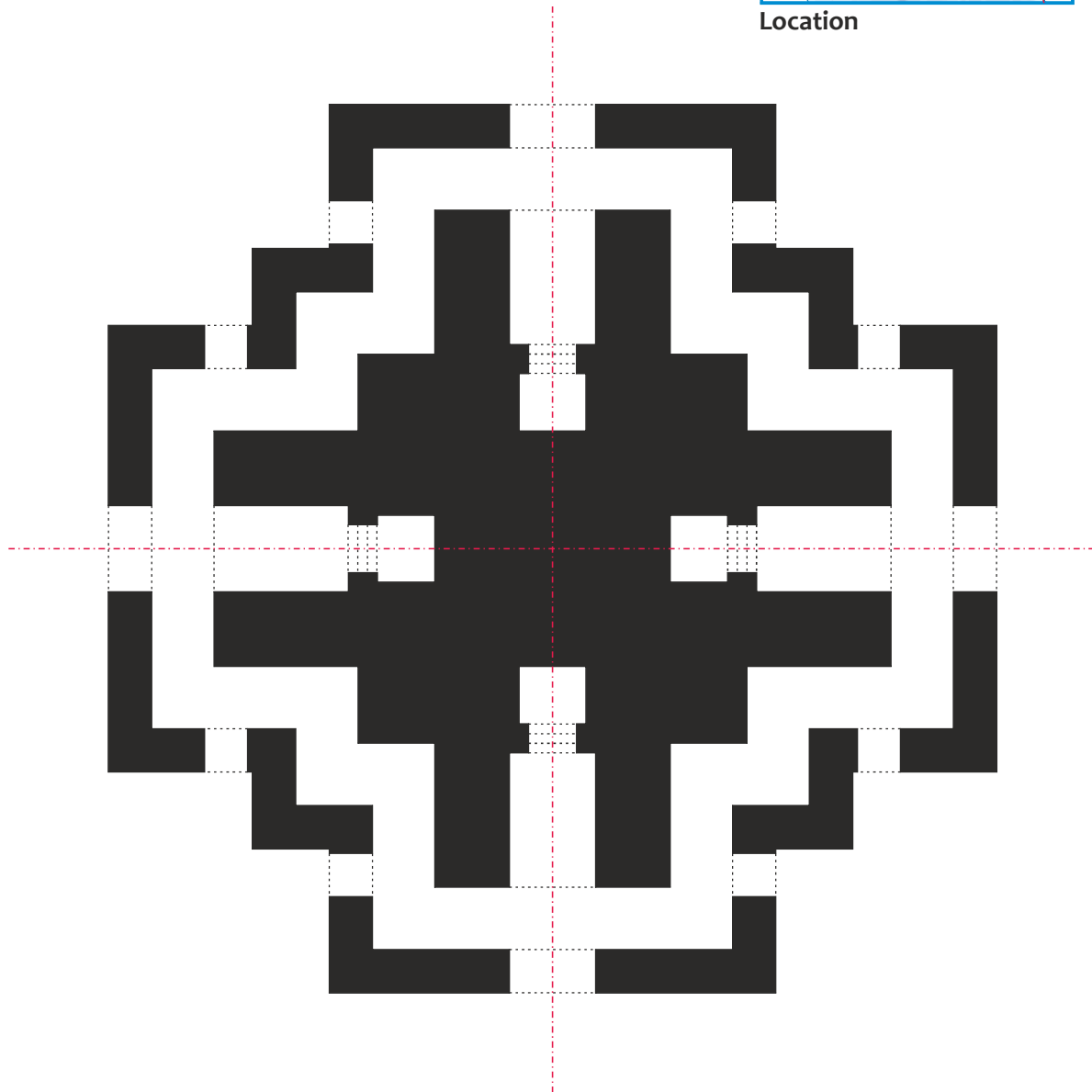
Figure 5.23(c): Thitsawadi Temple (AD 1334)

Source: [www.ancientbagan.com](http://www.ancientbagan.com)

**LOCATED AT**  
Rupbanmura vihara  
near Kotbari area,  
Comilla,  
Bangladesh



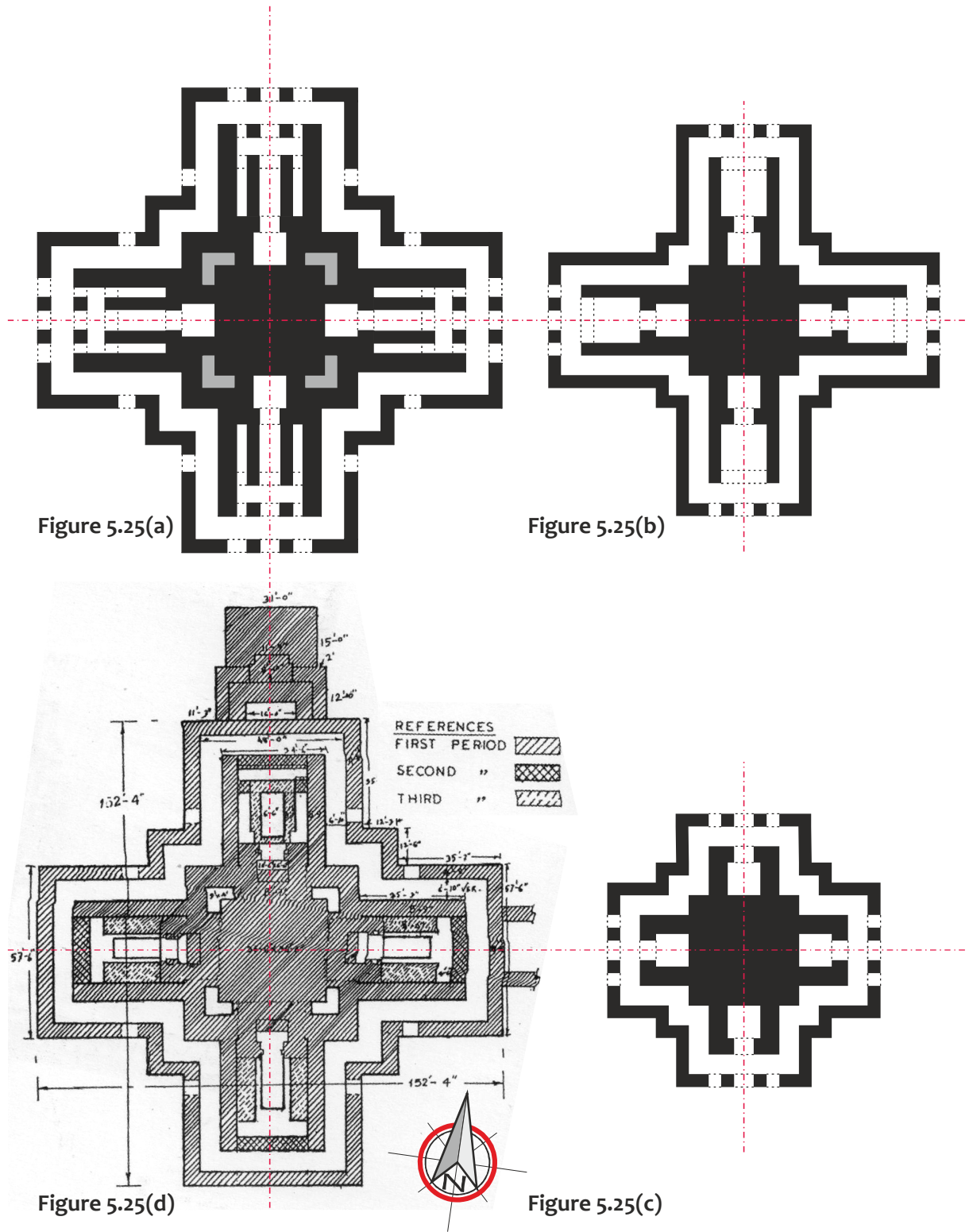
**Location**



**Figure 5.24:** Shrine of *Rupbānmurā vihāra*

Plan redrawn by author, based on archaeological plan

Archaeological layout collected from : Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh



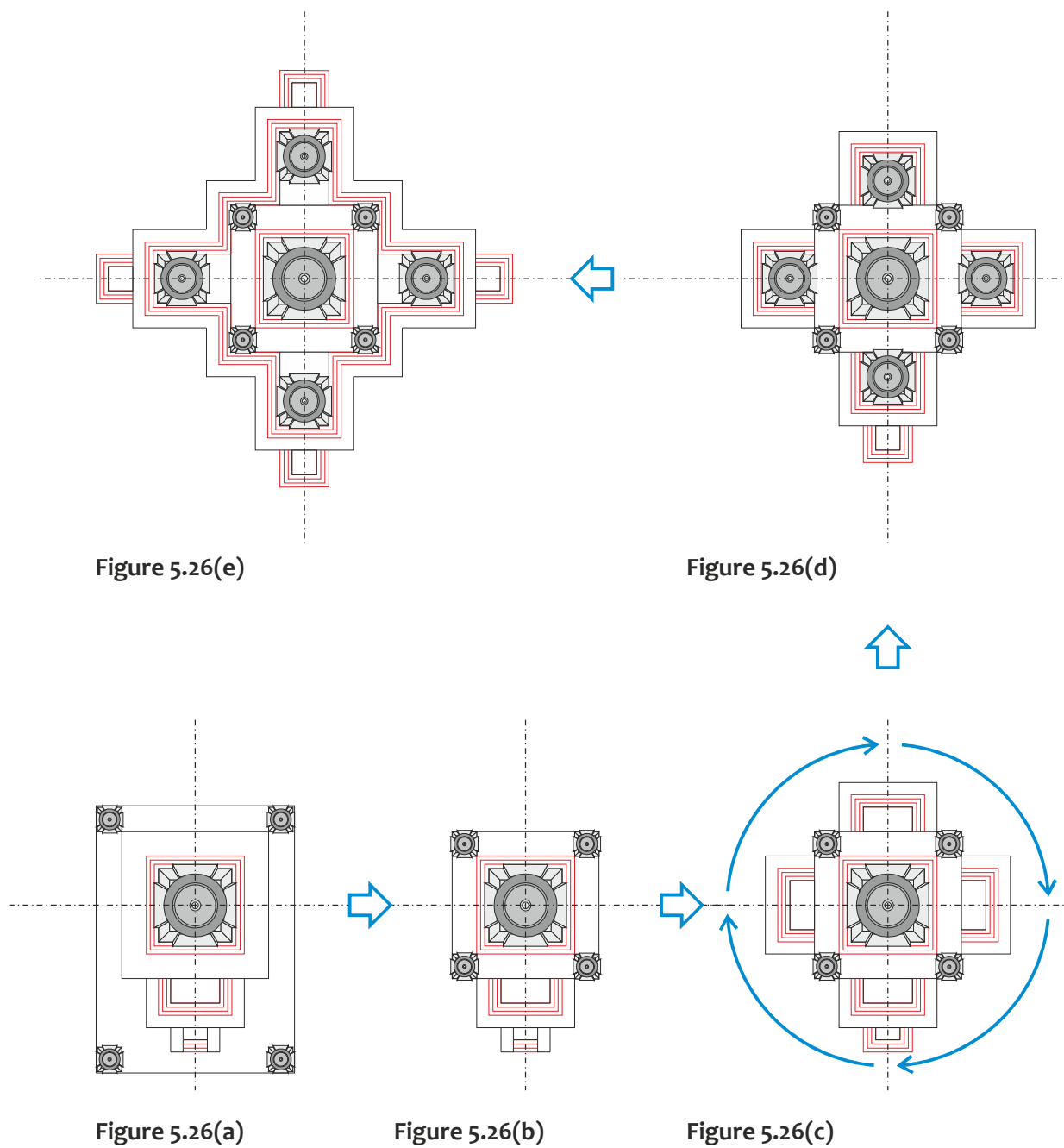
**Figure 5.25:** Central shrine of *Bhojā vihāra*

**Figure 5.25(a):** Conjectural architectural plan of 3rd Phase

**Figure 5.25(b):** Conjectural architectural plan of 2nd Phase

**Figure 5.25(c):** Conjectural architectural plan of 1st Phase

**Figure 5.25(d):** Archaeological layout, Source: Haque, E. (2007): Plate-185



**Figure 5.26:** Transformation from *triratha* to cruciform shrine

**Figure 5.26(a):** Conjectural roof plan of the shrine of *Bharat Bhayna*

**Figure 5.26(b):** Conjectural roof plan of the shrine at north-eastern corner of *Sālban vihāra* (Second Phase)

**Figure 5.26(c):** Conjectural roof plan of the shrine of *Rupbānmurā vihāra*

**Figure 5.26(d):** Conjectural roof plan of the central shrine of *Sālban vihāra*

**Figure 5.26(e):** Conjectural roof plan of the central shrine of *Pahāṇpur vihāra*

**LOCATED AT**  
Ananda Temple  
Southeast of Tharabar Gate  
Old Bagan  
Myanmar



**Location**



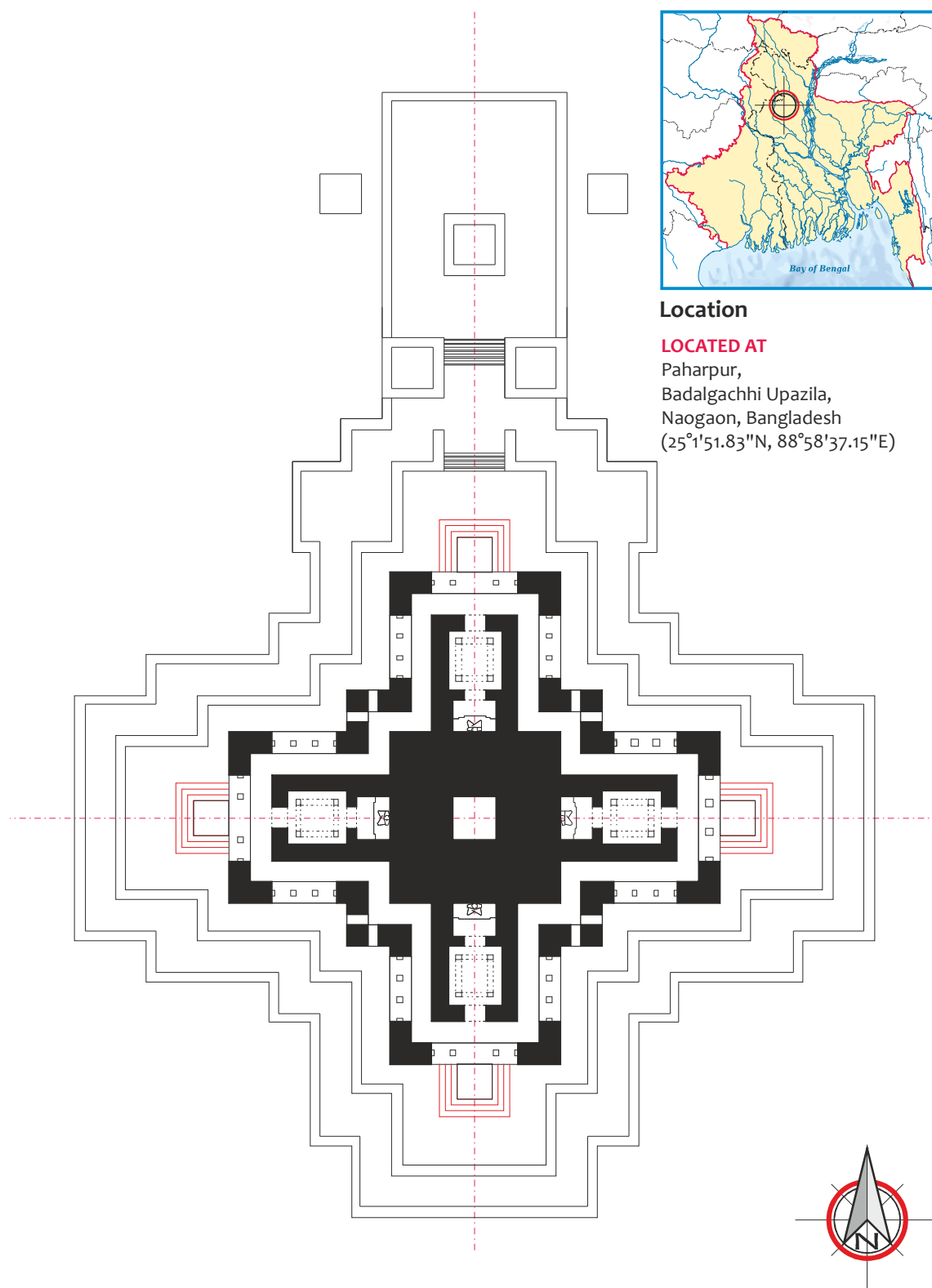
**Figure 5.27(a,b &c)**

**Figure 5.27:** *Pañchatatana* crown on Pagan temple

**Figure 5.27(a,b & c):** Showing *pañchatatana* crown of Ānanda temple of Pagan, Myanmar

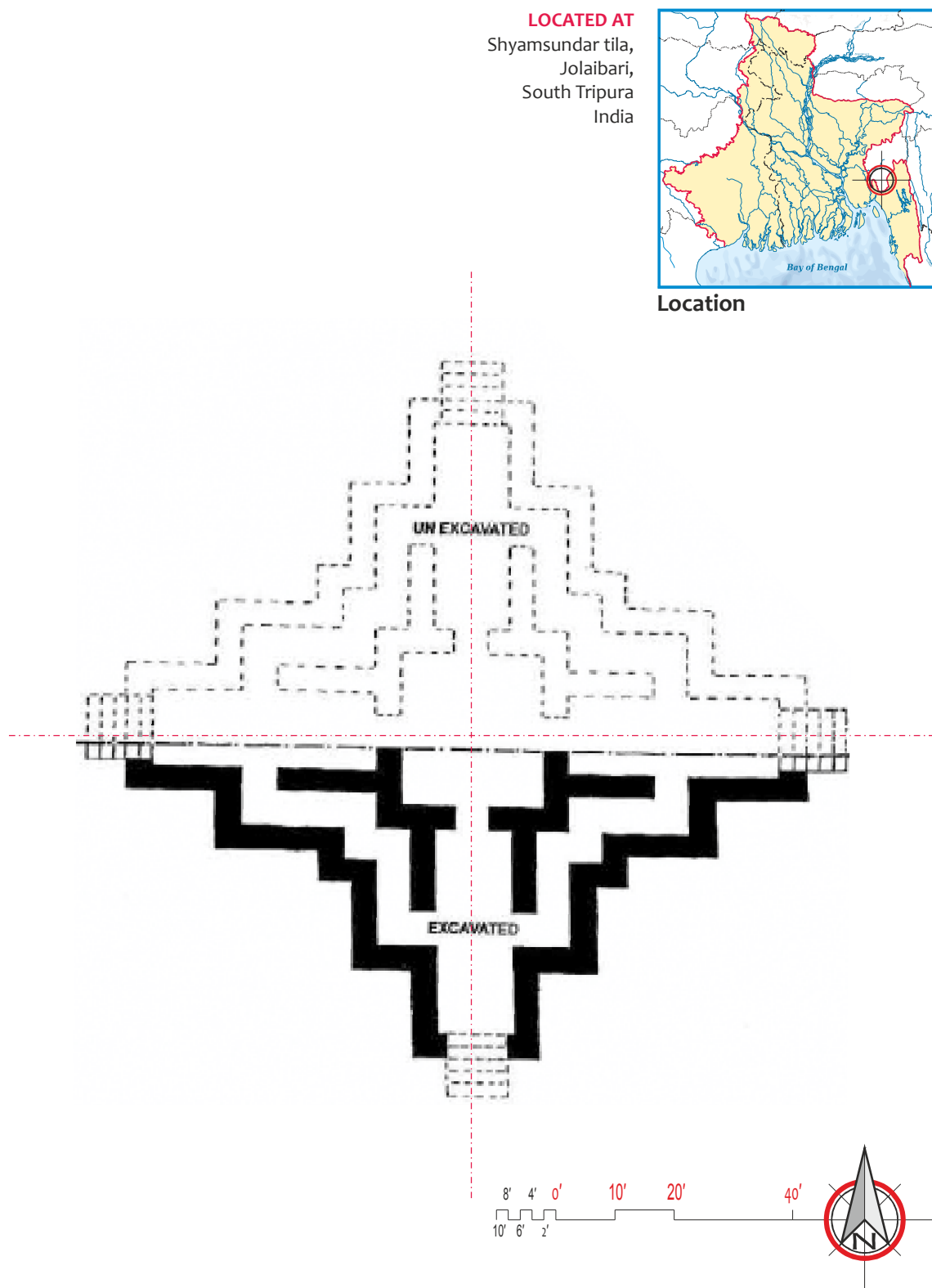
Source: [www.ancientbagan.com](http://www.ancientbagan.com)





**Figure 5.28:** Conjectural ground plan of the central shrine of *Pahārpur vihāra*

Proposed architectural plan for the central shrine



**Figure 5.29:** *Shamsuṇḍar tillā*, Tripura

**Source:** Indian Archaeology 1999-2000: A Review, Page-154





Figure 5.30(a)

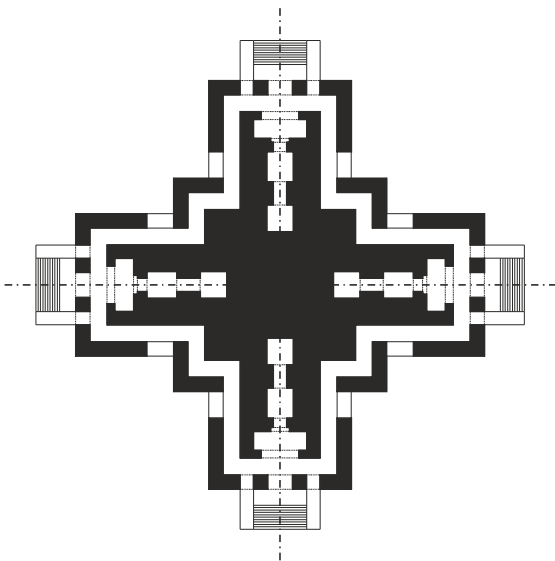


Figure 5.30(b)

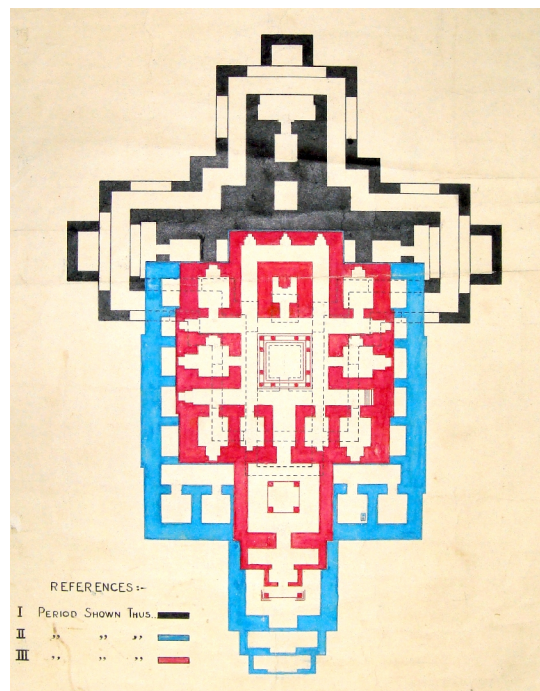


Figure 5.30(c)

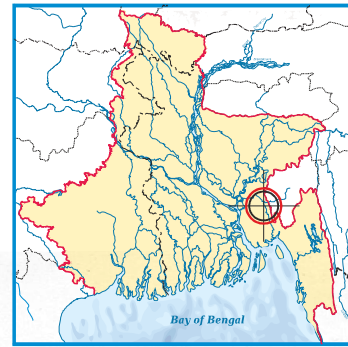
### Figure 5.30: Central shrine of Sālban vihāra

Figure 5.30(a): Showing cruciform shrine under the rectangular shrine of later construction

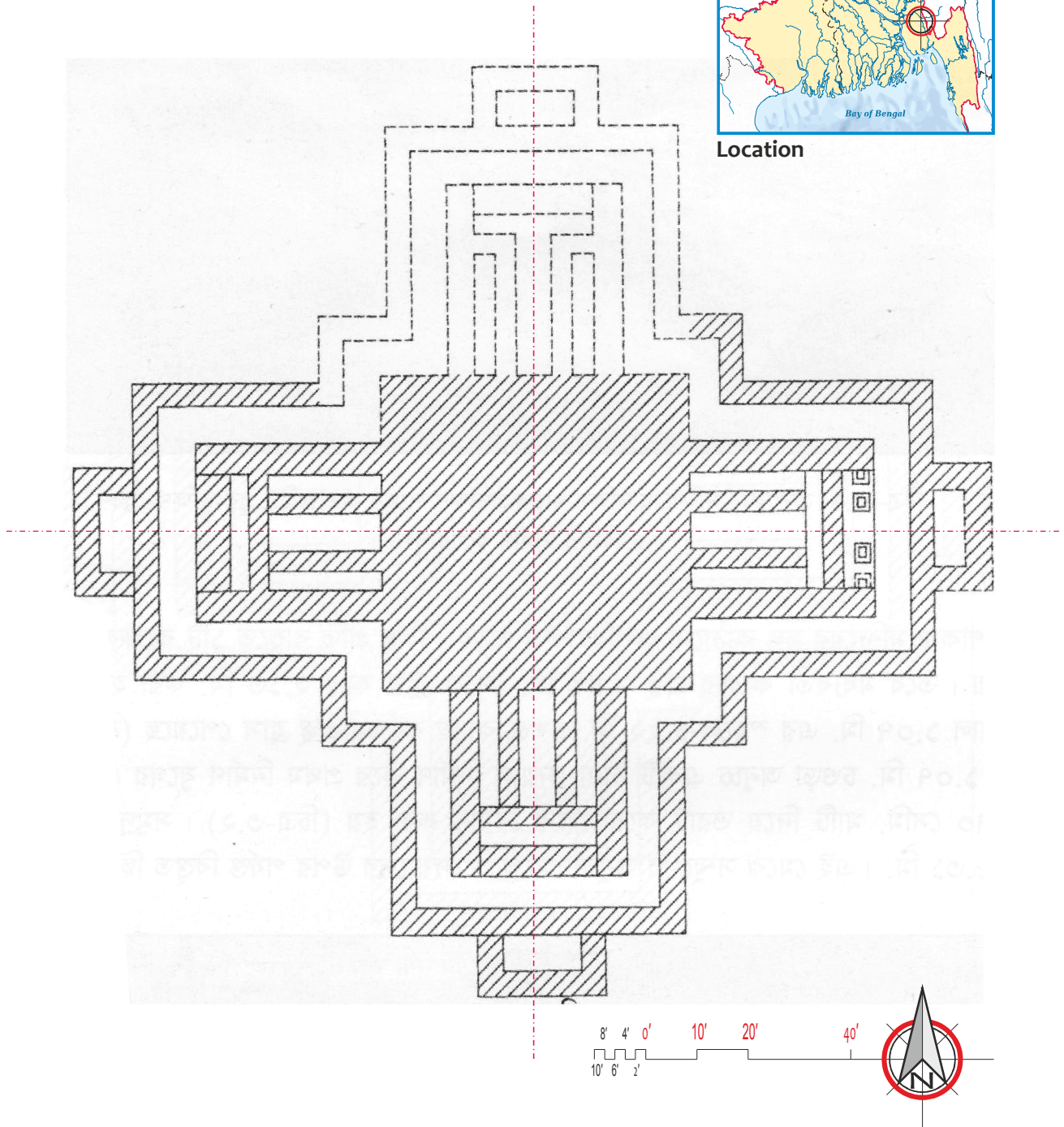
Figure 5.30(b): Conjectural architectural plan of the central shrine of Sālban vihāra (First Phase)

Figure 5.30(c): Archaeological layout of Sālban vihāra, Source: Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh

**LOCATED AT**  
Ananda vihara  
near Kotbari area  
Comilla  
Bangladesh

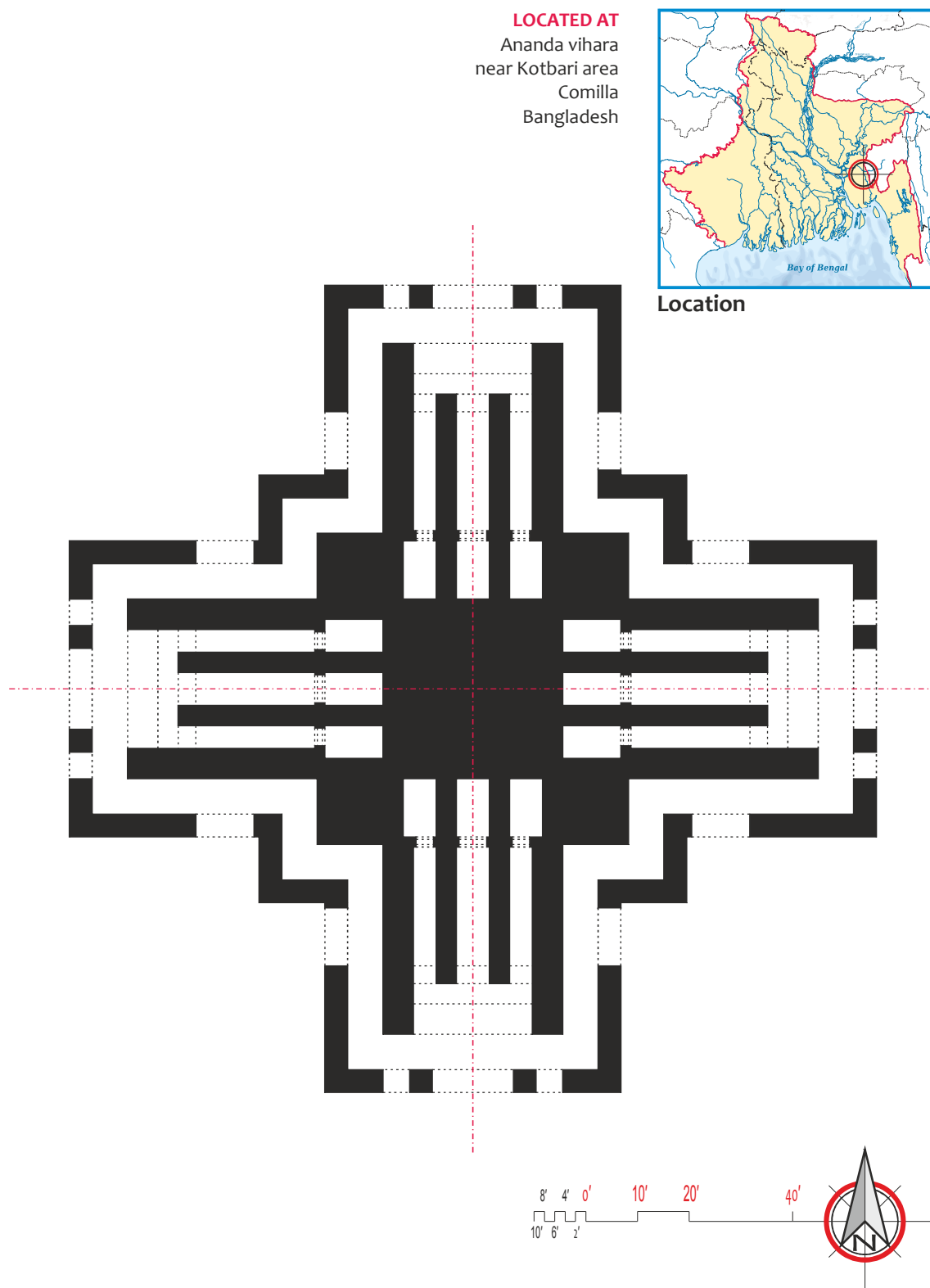


**Location**



**Figure 5.31:** Archaeological plan of the central shrine at Ānanda vihāra (Phase 2)

**Source:** Alam, M. S., M. M. Rahman, M. Sadekuzzaman & M. M. Rahman :2008, Dwg-3.3



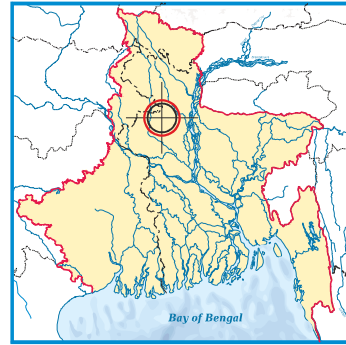
**Figure 5.32:** Conjectural plan of the central shrine at Ānanda vihāra (Phase 2)

Proposed architectural plan for Ānanda vihāra (Phase 2)

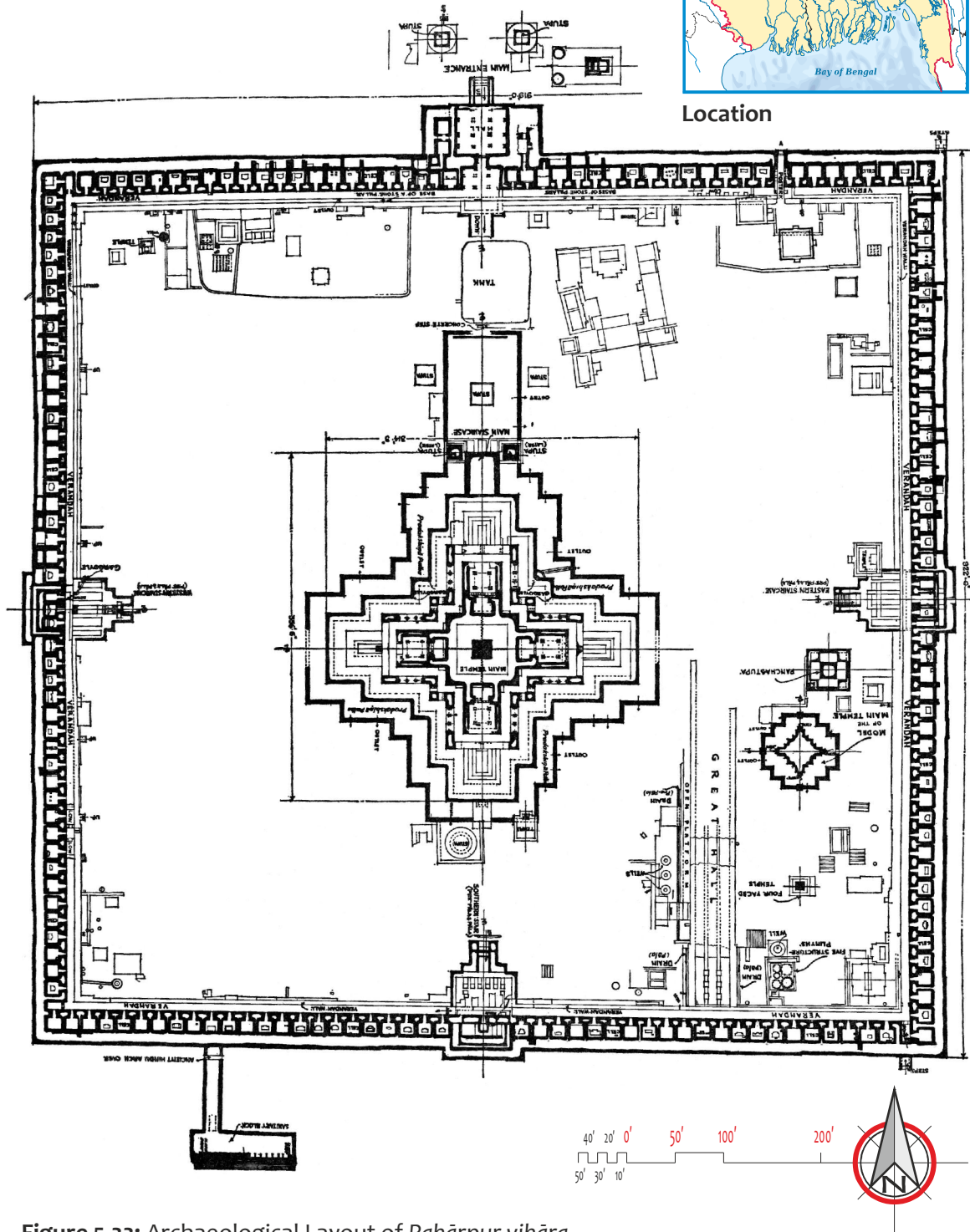


**LOCATED AT**

Paharpur  
Badalgachhi Upazila  
Naogaon, Bangladesh  
(25°1'51.83"N, 88°58'37.15"E)



Location



**Figure 5.33:** Archaeological Layout of *Pahārpur viihāra*

archaeological layout by Dikshit

Source: Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh



Figure 5.34(a)



Figure 5.34(b)

**Figure 5.34:** View of *Pahārpur viihāra* (Pradakshina path )

Figure 5.34(a): View towards the entrance

Figure 5.34(b): View towards the wing shrine

Source: Google image



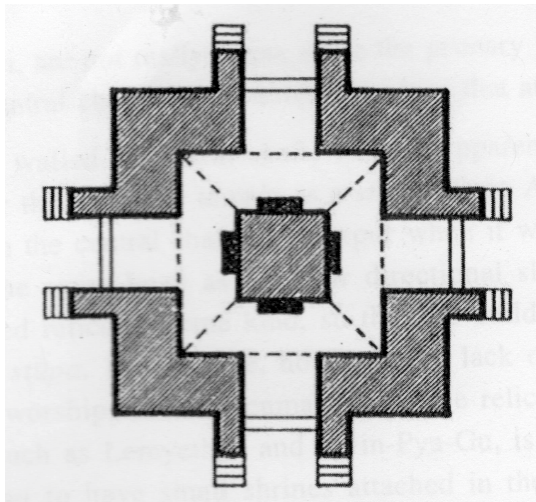


Figure 5.35(a)



Figure 5.35(b)



Location

**LOCATED AT**  
**LEMYETHNA**  
 Minnanthu  
 Nyaung U & Wetkyi-In  
 Myanmar

**MYIN-PYA-GU**  
 Hamawza,  
 Myanmar

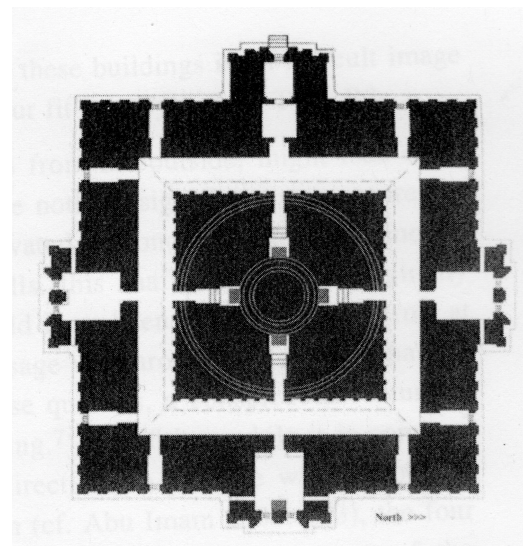
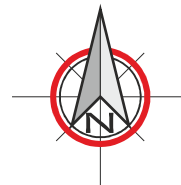


Figure 5.35(b)

### Figure 5.35: Pagan Temples

Figure 5.35(a): Plan of Lemyethna temple

Figure 5.35(b): View of Lemyethna temple

Figure 5.35(c): Myin-Pya-Gu temple plan

Source: Samuel G. (2002) Ritual technologies and the state: The Mandala-form Buddhist temples of Bangladesh. Journal of Bengal Art 7: 39-56, Plate 3.5

**LOCATED AT**  
Ananda Temple  
Southeast of Tharabar Gate  
Old Bagan  
Myanmar



Location

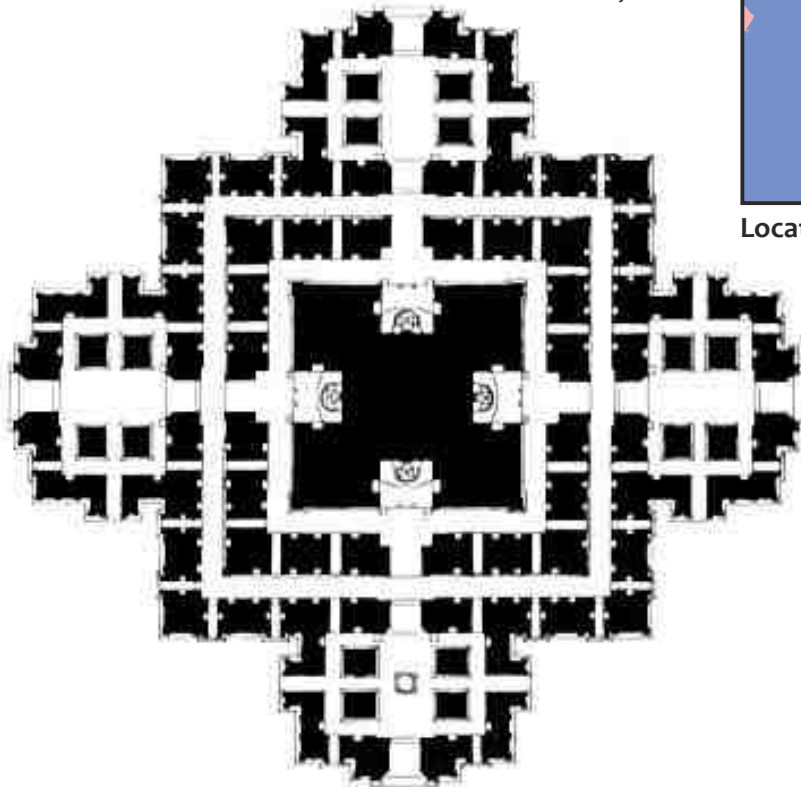


Figure 5.36(a)



Figure 5.36(b)

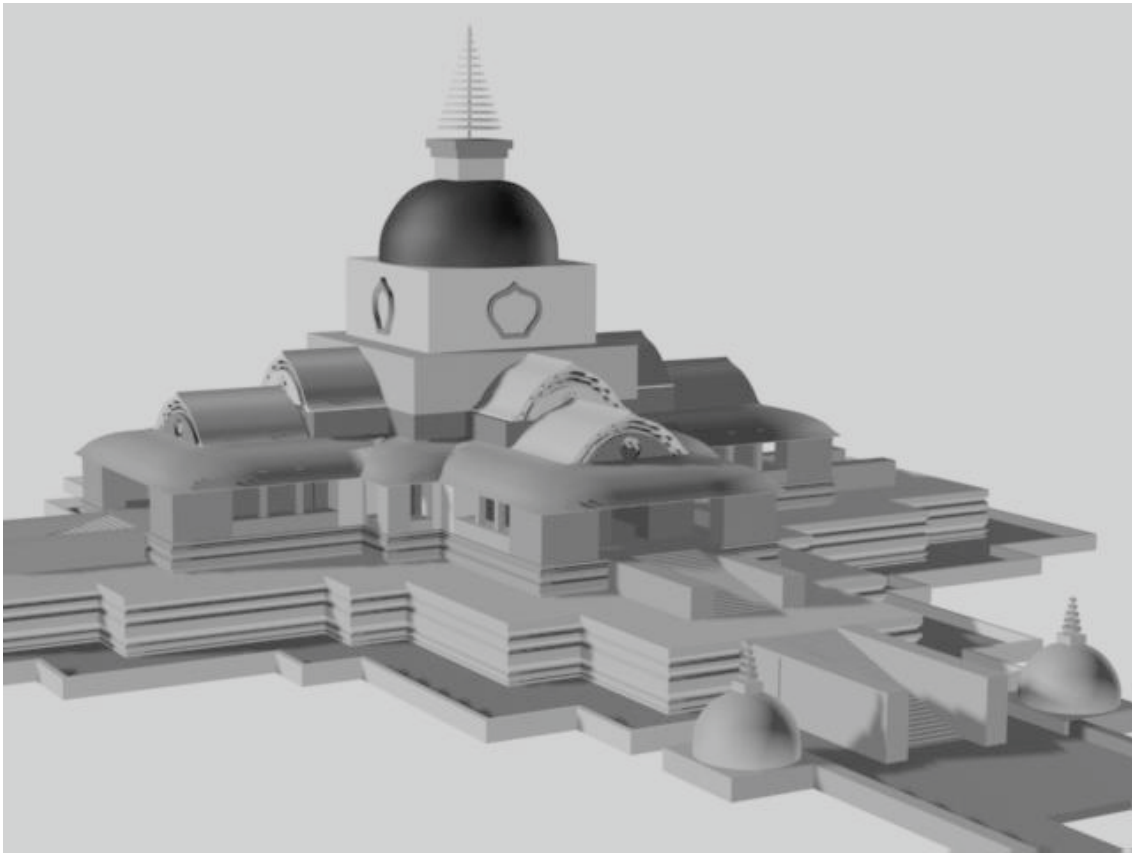
**Figure 5.36:** Ānanda temple of Pagan, Myanmar

Figure 5.36(a): Ground Plan of Ānanda temple

Figure 5.36(b): Section through center of Ānanda temple

Source: [www.ancientbagan.com](http://www.ancientbagan.com)

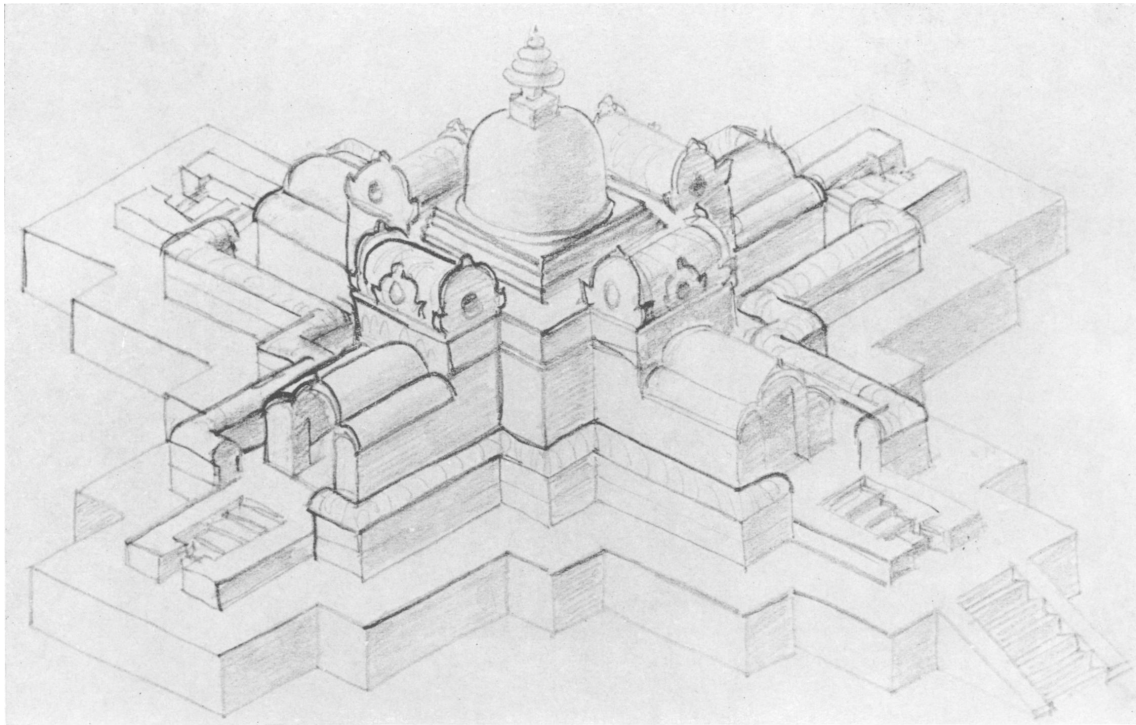




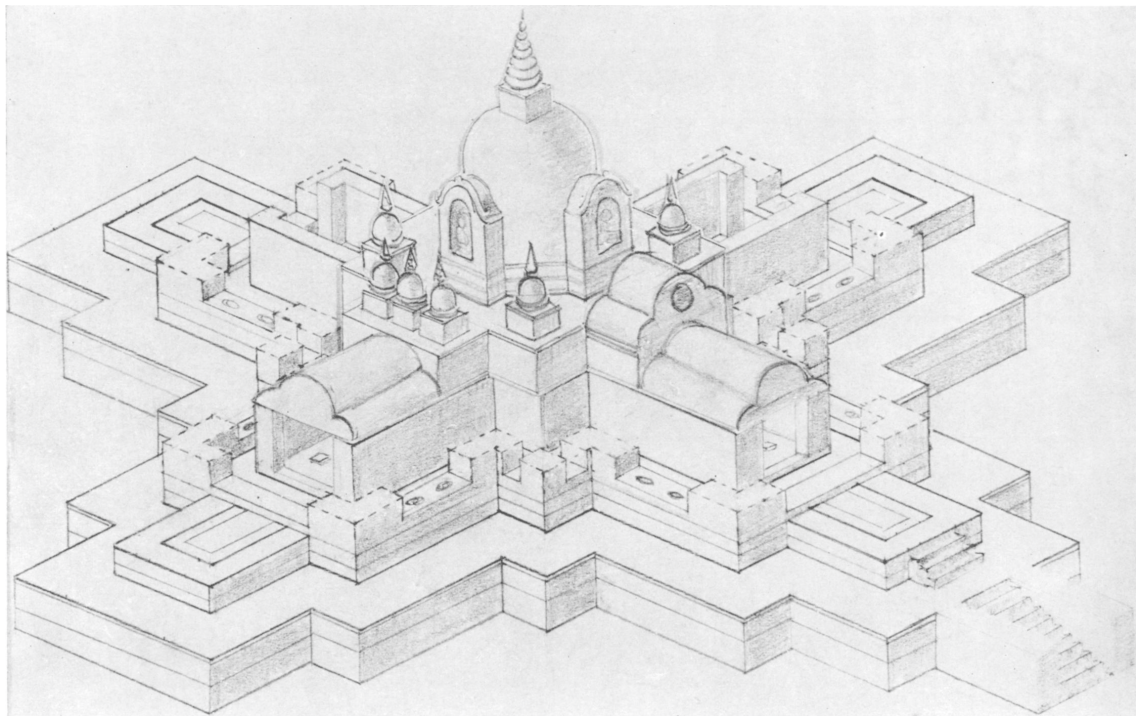
**Figure 5.37:** Rashid's reconstructed view of *Pahārpur vihāra* central *stūpa*

Reconstructed view of the possible three dimensional articulation of the central structure of Sompur Mahavihara, Paharpur by Rashid M M

**Source:** Rashid, M. M. :2006, Figure-8



**Figure 5.38(a)**



**Figure 5.38(b)**

**Figure 5.38: Myer's first and alternate proposal**

**Figure 5.38(a):** Hypothetical reconstruction of *Pahārpur*

**Figure 5.38(b):** Hypothetical reconstruction of *Pahārpur* (alternate option)

**Source:** Myer, P. R., 1961: Fig:6 & 7



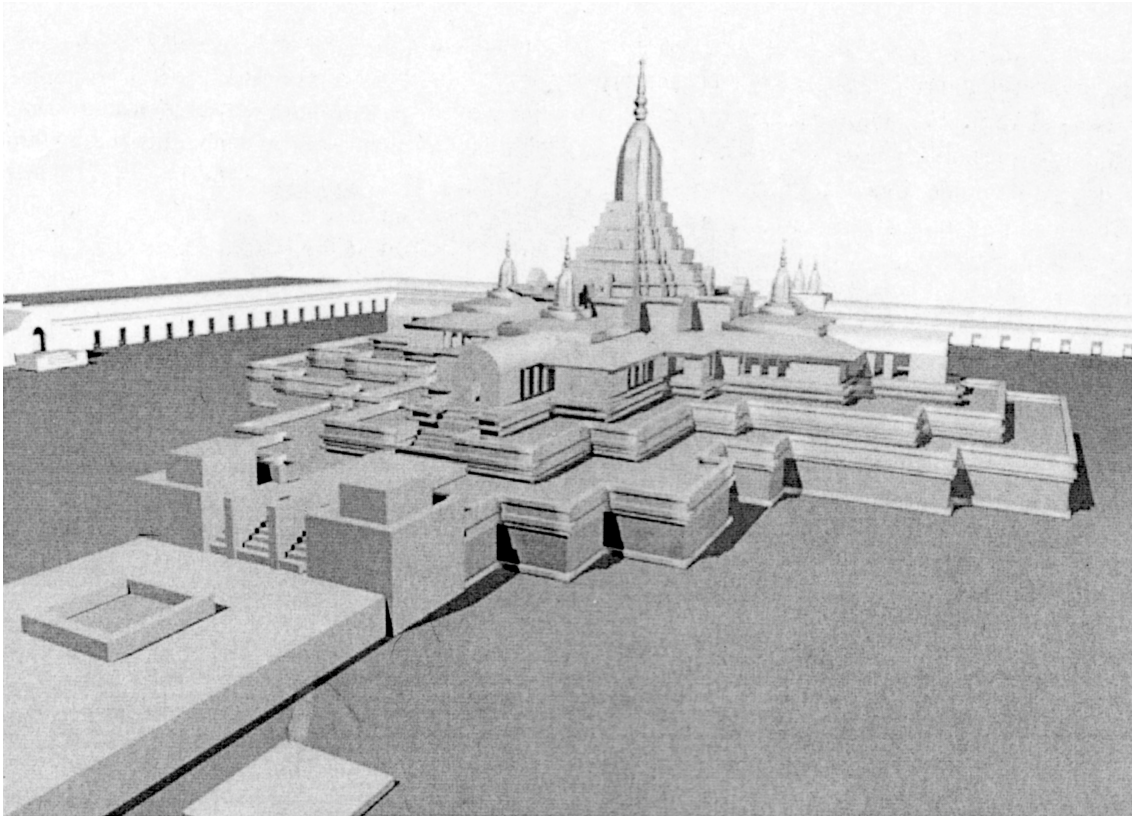


Figure 5.39(a)

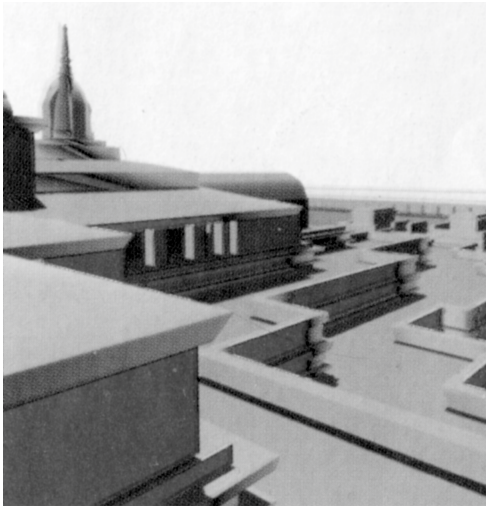


Figure 5.39(b)

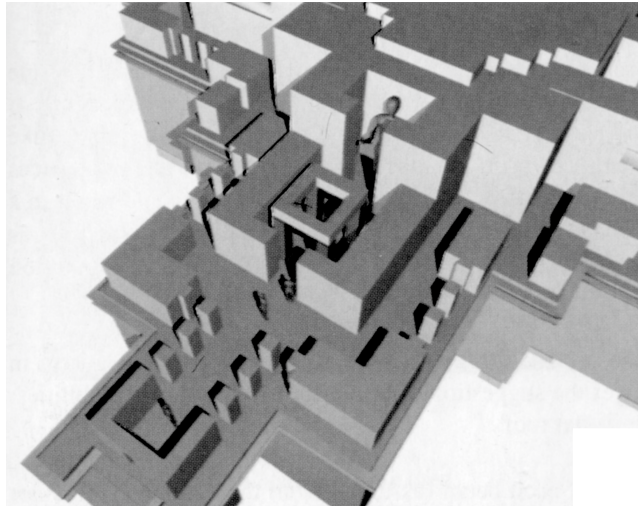


Figure 5.39(c)

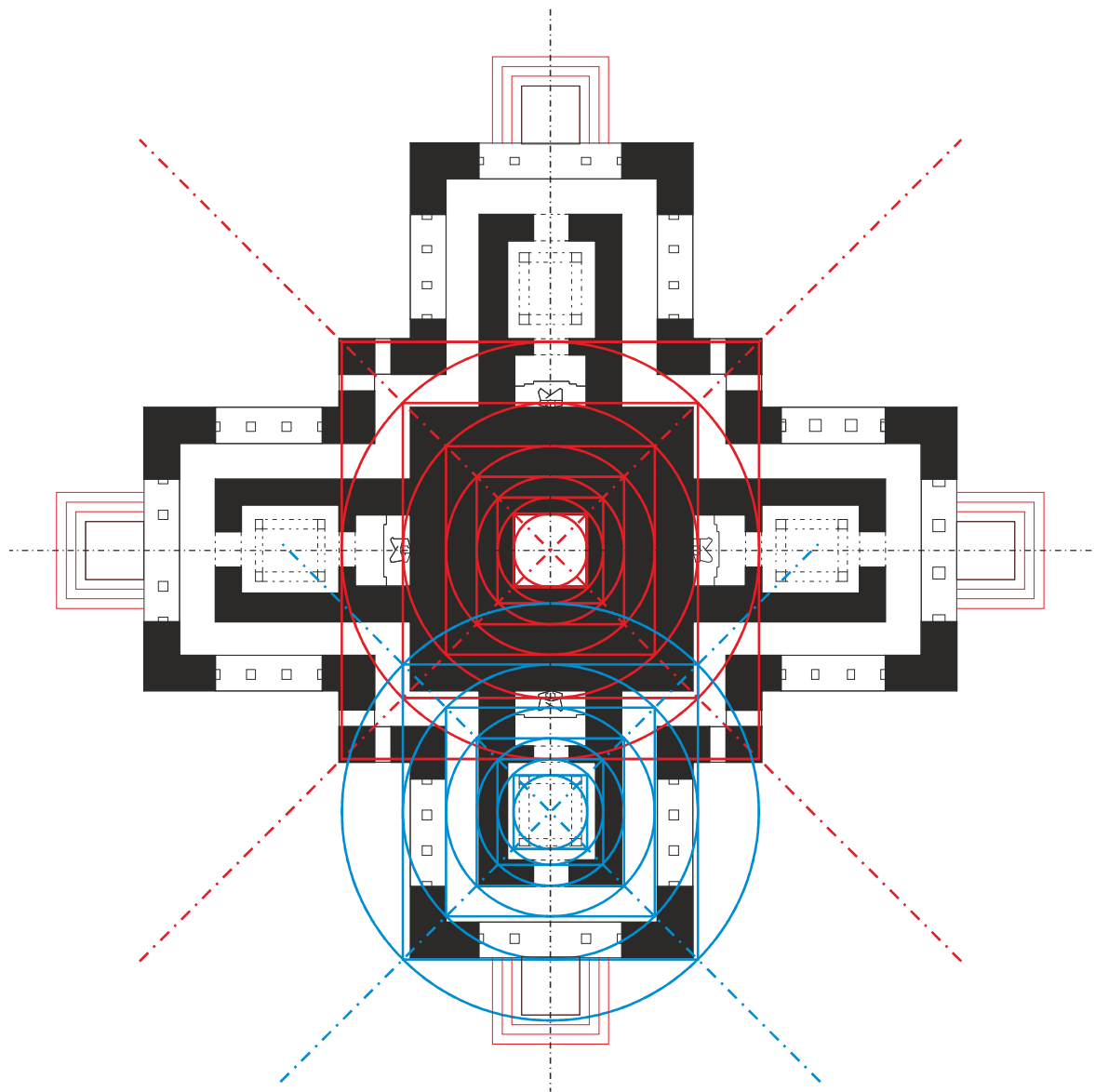
**Figure 5.39:** Central shrine of *Pahārpur* by Naqi & Mollick

Figure 5.39(a): Perspective view of the central shrine

Figure 5.39(b): View towards the entry from the shrine

Figure 5.39(c): Sectional perspective of the shrine

Source: Naqi, M. A. & F. Mollick, 2004.: Fig:6 & 7



**Figure 5.40:** Proportioning system of the central shrine of *Pahārpur vihāra*

Showing proportioning system of Cruciform shrine

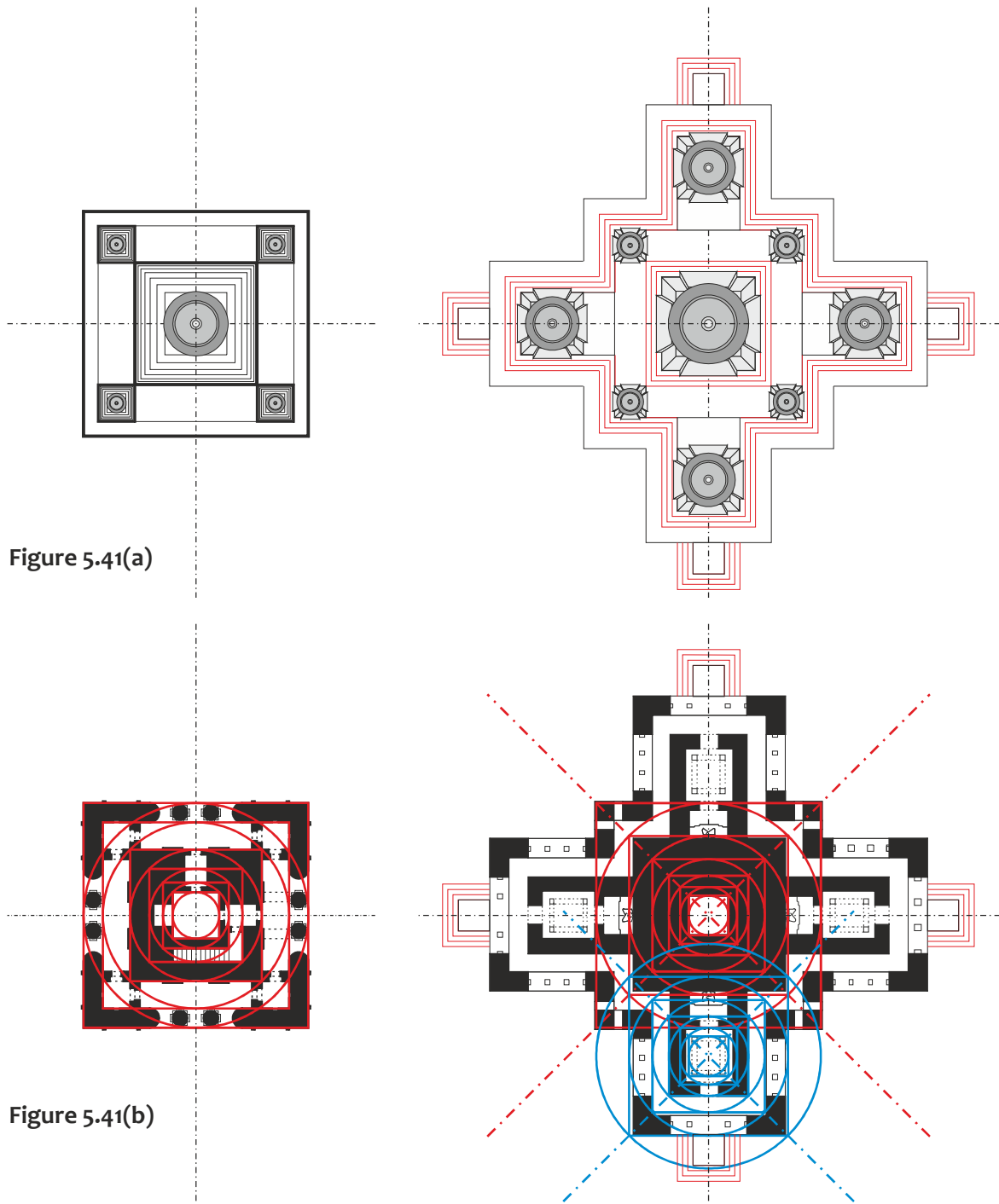


Figure 5.41(a)

Figure 5.41(b)

**Figure 5.41:** Similarities between *Panchatarna* and the cruciform shrine

Figure 5.41(a): Similar roof plan

Figure 5.41(b): Similar ground plan with proportioning system

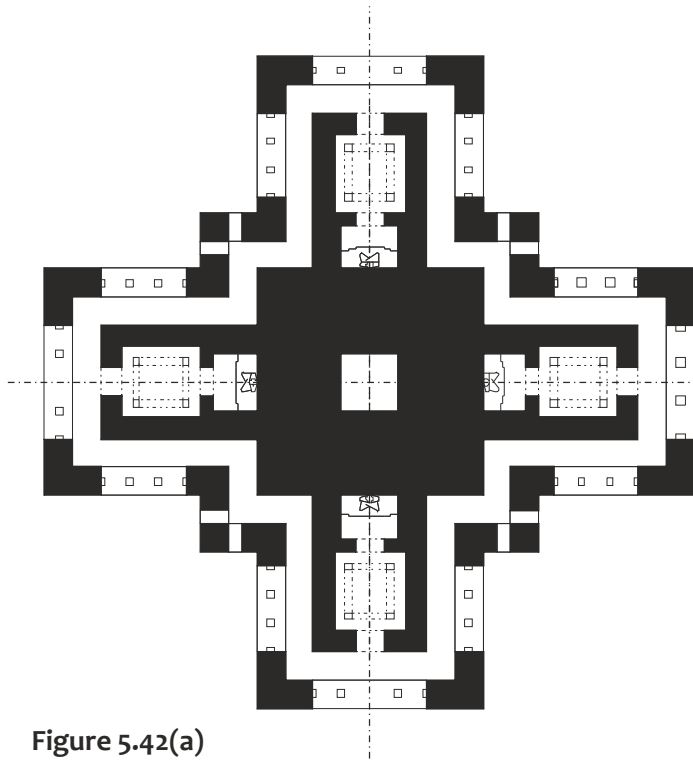


Figure 5.42(a)

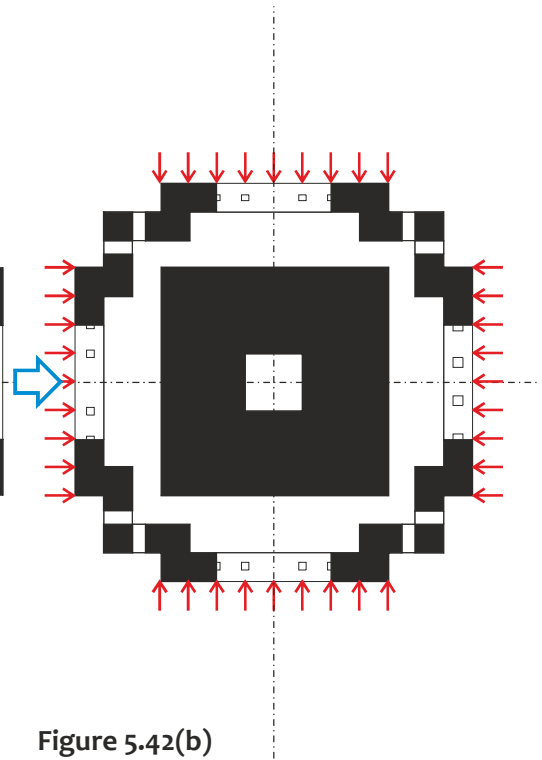


Figure 5.42(b)

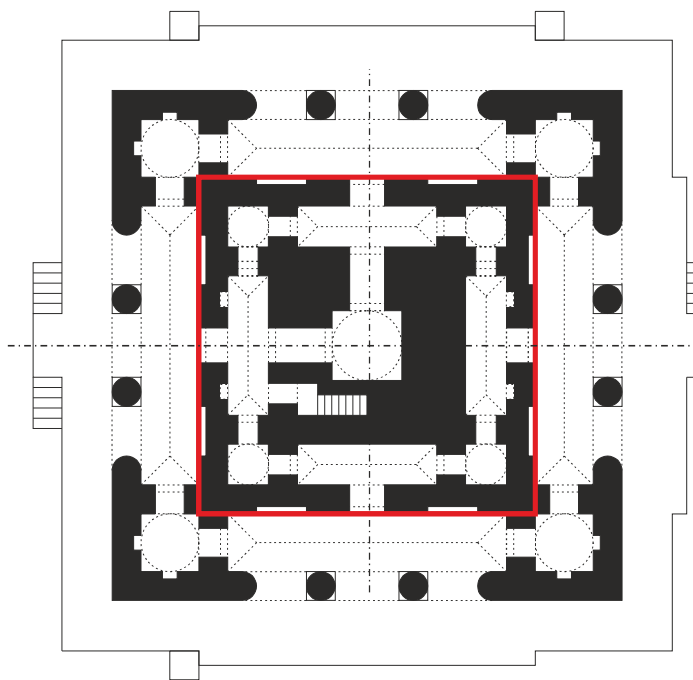


Figure 5.42(d)

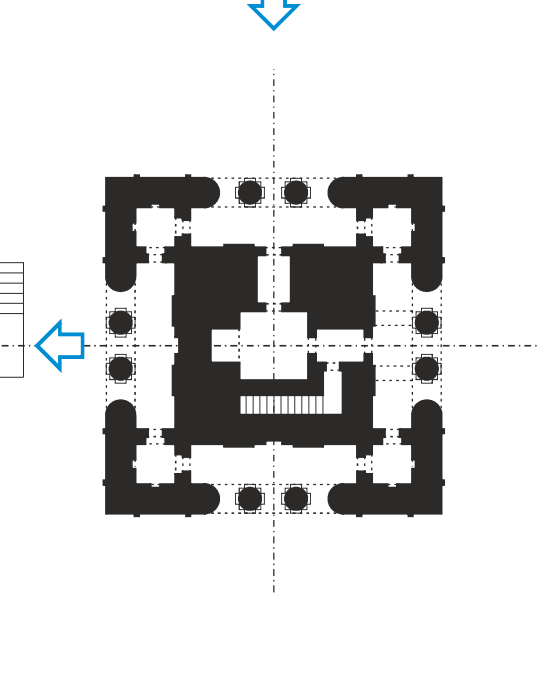


Figure 5.42(c)

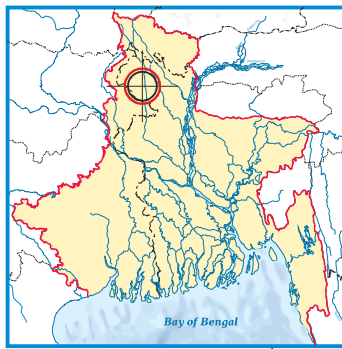
### Figure 5.42: : From cruciform to *ratna* shrine

Figure 5.42(a): Conjectural architectural plan of central shrine of Pahārpur vihāra

Figure 5.42(b): transformation towards *pancha ratna*

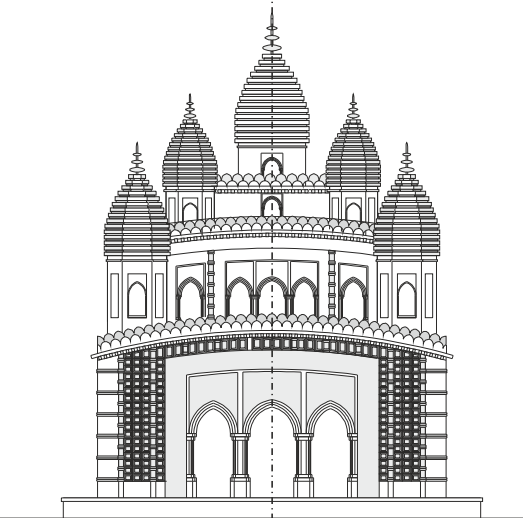
Figure 5.42(c): *Pancharatna* shrine, Shayamraya Temple at Bishnupur

Figure 5.42(d): *Navaratna* shrine, Kantaji Temple, red box showing *pancharatna* origin



**LOCATED AT**  
Kantanagar,  
Dinajpur,  
Bangladesh

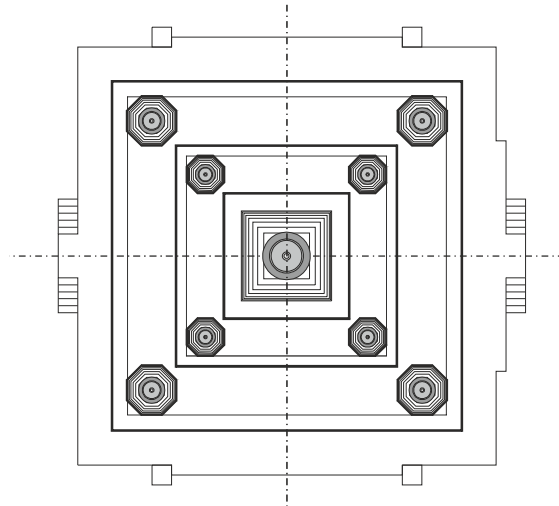
**Location**



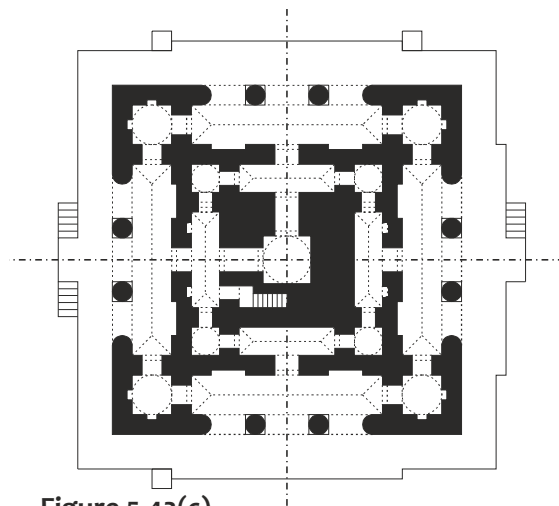
**Figure 5.43(a)**



**Figure 5.43(d)**



**Figure 5.43(b)**



**Figure 5.43(c)**



**Figure 5.43(e)**

### **Figure 5.43: Kāntajī temple**

**Figure 5.43(a):** Front Elevation

**Figure 5.43(b):** Plan of Roof

**Figure 5.43(c):** Ground Floor Plan

**Figure 5.43(d):** Photograph (1871) by John Henry Ravenshaw, Source: British Library

**Figure 5.43(e):** Photograph (2010)



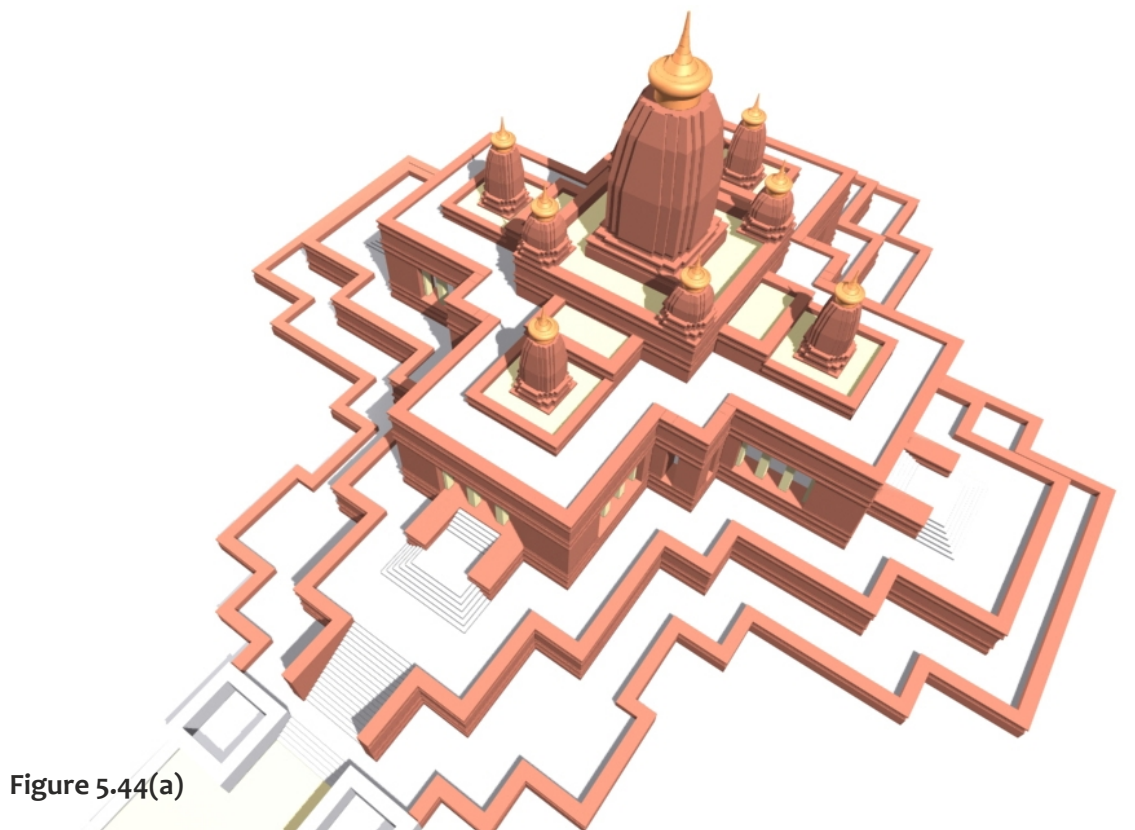


Figure 5.44(a)

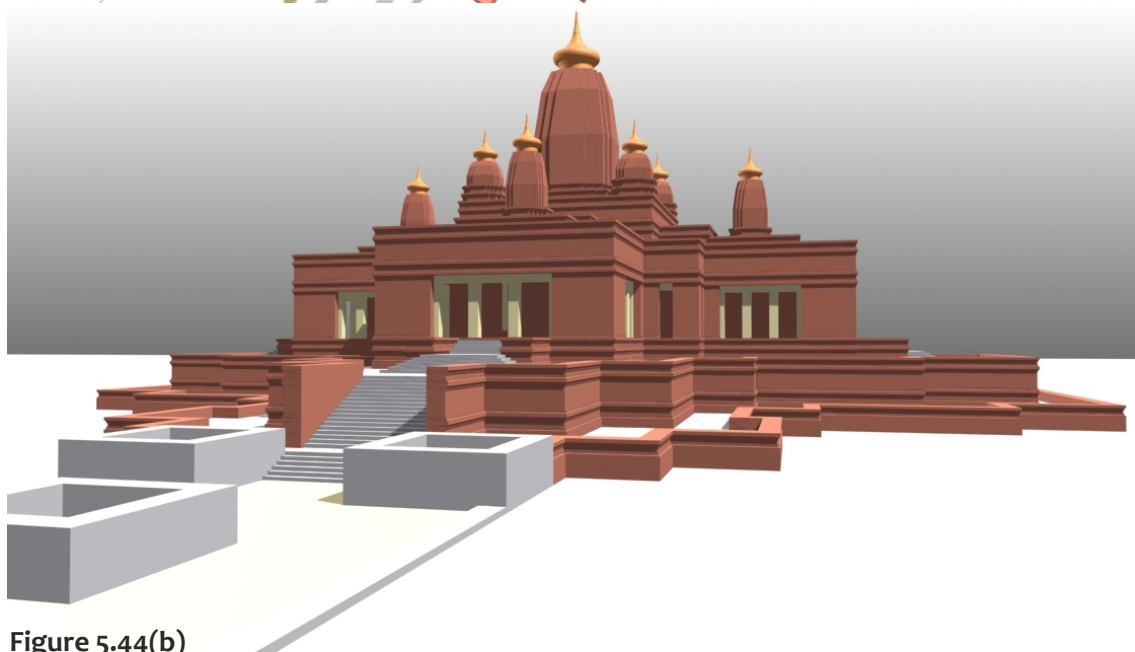


Figure 5.44(b)

**Figure 5.44:** Conjectural model of the central shrine of *Pahāṛpur vihāra*

Figure 5.44(a) & (b): Proposed virtual reconstruction of the central shrine

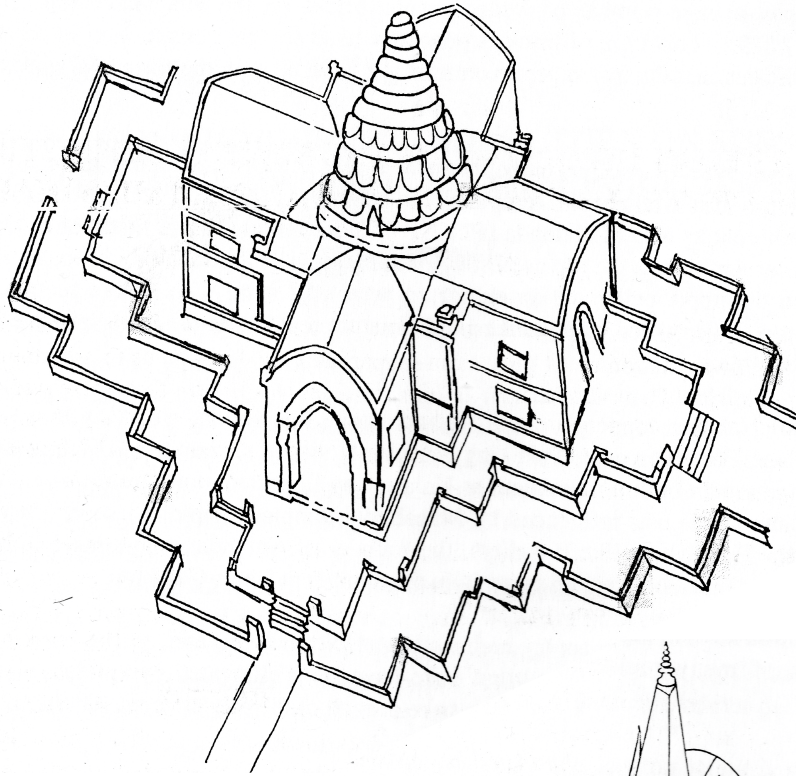


Figure 5.4

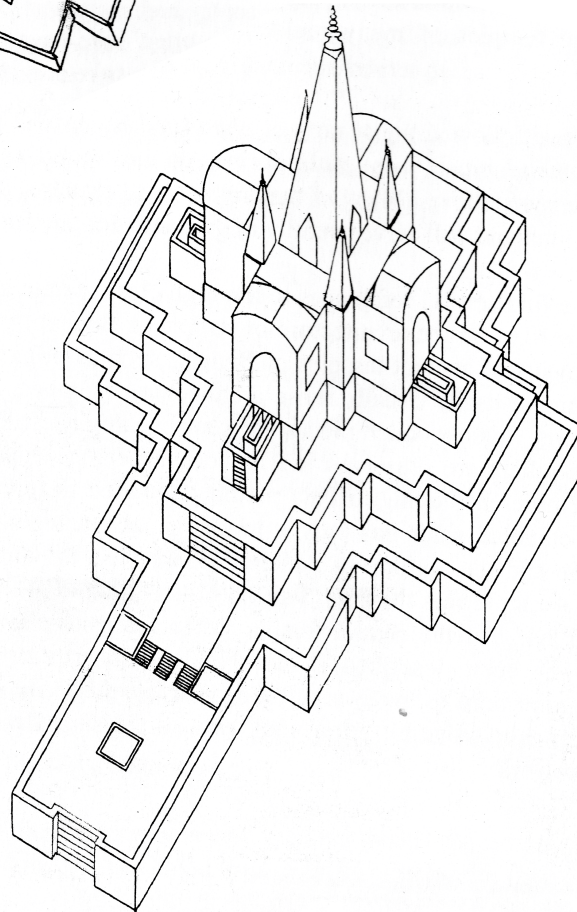


Figure 5.45(b)

#### Figure 5.45: Akbar's model for the central shrine of *Pahārpur vihāra*

Akbar's conjectural model of the central shrine of *Pahārpur vihāra*, proposed in his "An study on the architecture of the missing superstructure on the central Somapuri Mahavihara" (Akbar, S. M. 2004: Page-85).

Figure 5.45(a): Model proposed by some Japanese architect (Akbar, S. M. 2004: Fig-15.1)

Figure 5.45(b): Model proposed by Akbar (Akbar, S. M. 2004: Fig-15.2)

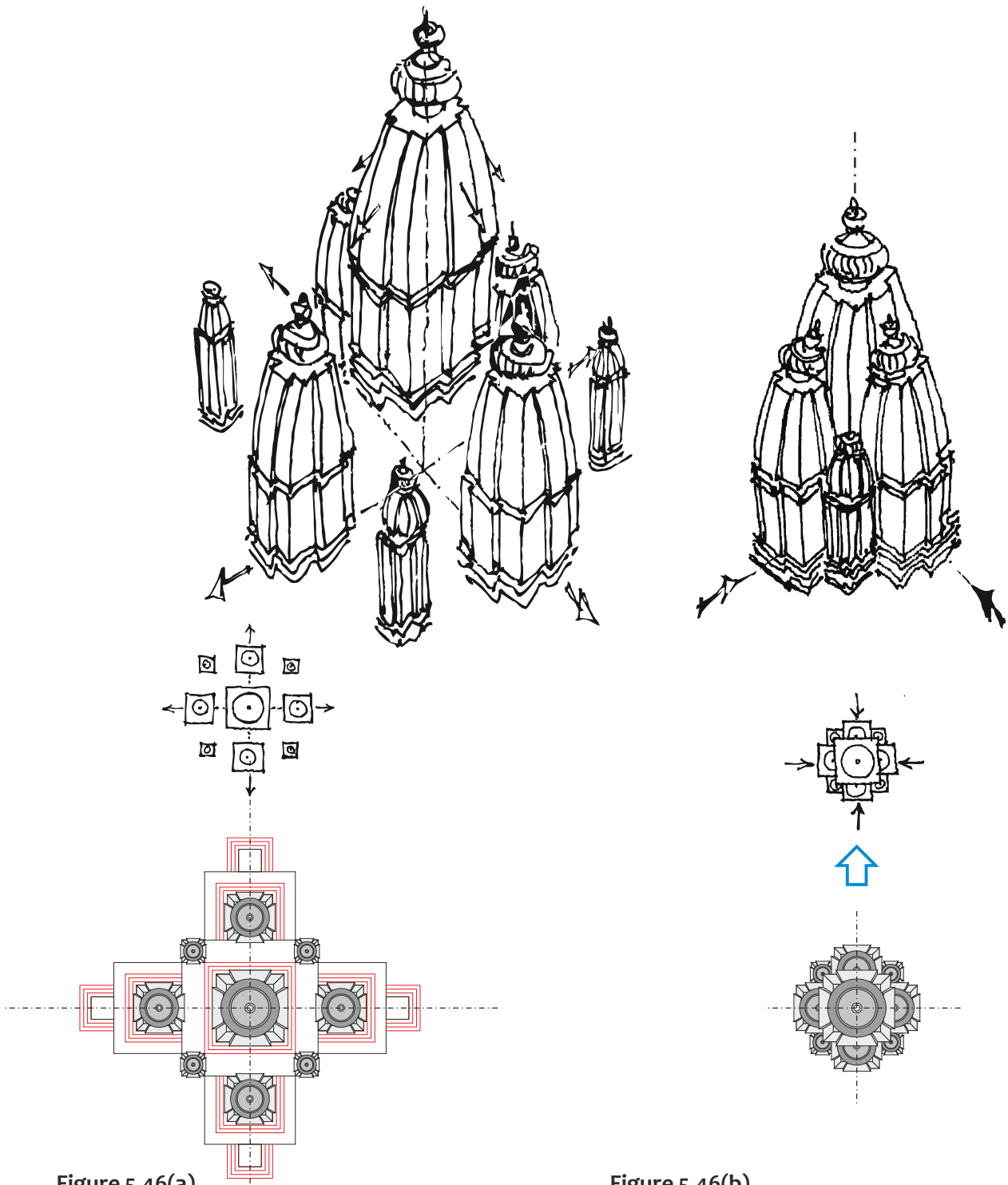


Figure 5.46(a)

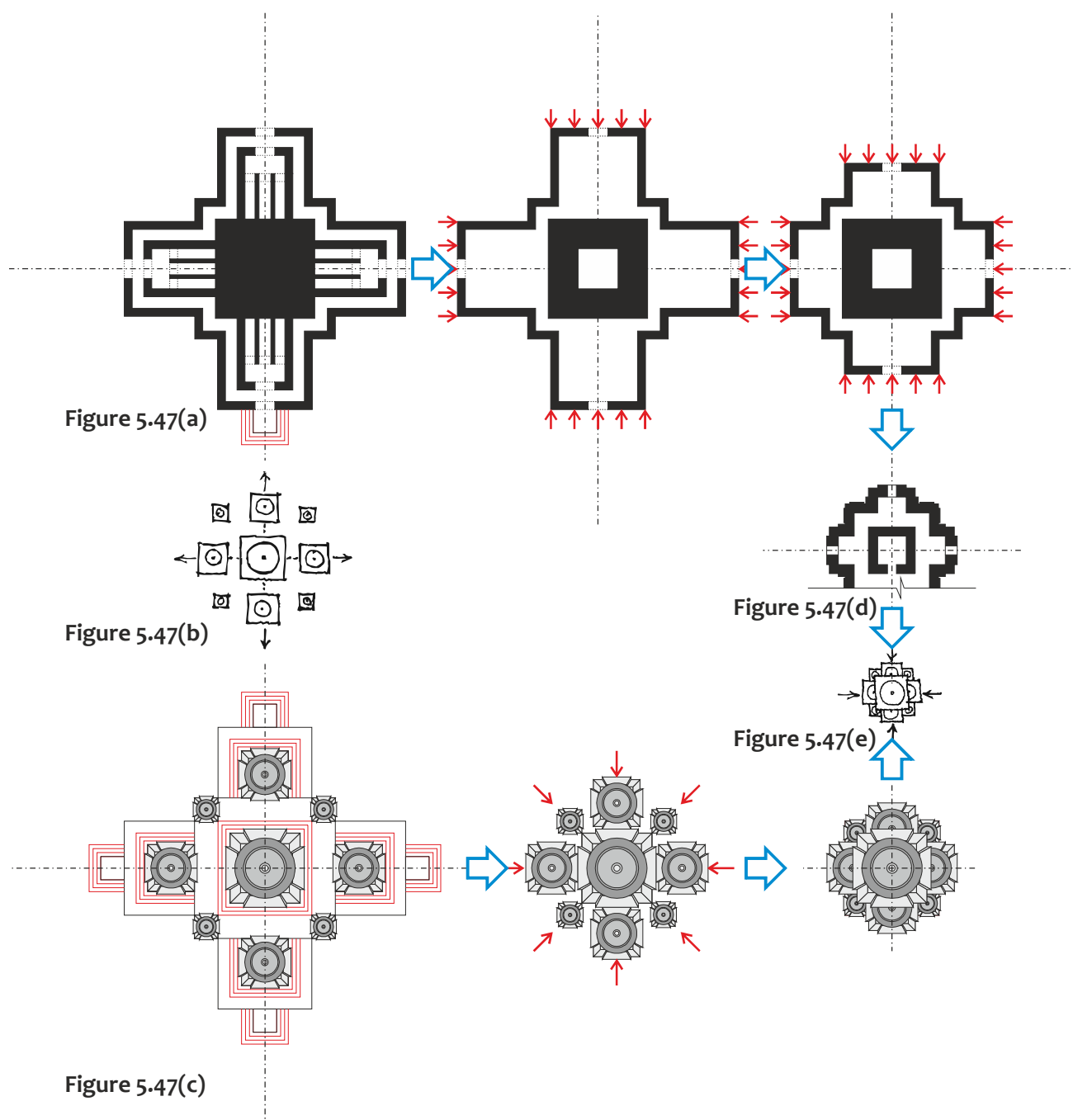
Figure 5.46(b)

**Figure 5.46:** Similarity between cruciform and śikhari shrines

**Figure 5.46(a):** Cruciform shrine (Roof Plan, conceptual plan & 3D)

**Figure 5.46(b):** śikhari shrine (Roof Plan, conceptual plan & 3D)

**Source:** 3D model drawings from Adam Hardy



**Figure 5.47:** Similarities between cruciform shrine with Khajuraho temples

**Figure 5.47(a):** Architectural plan of a cruciform shrine

**Figure 5.47(b):** Conceptual roof plan of a cruciform shrine

**Figure 5.47(c):** Conjectural roof plan of a cruciform shrine

**Figure 5.47(d):** Partial plan of a Khajuraho temple

**Figure 5.47(e):** Partial conceptual roof plan of a Khajuraho temple (See Figure -5.9: Lakshmana Temple)

History of Bengal is marked by five chronological segments; these are the Pre-historic period, the Hindu-Buddhist period, the Muslim period, the Colonial period and the post-Colonial period. While little material evidence exists prior to the early historic period (Hindu-Buddhist period) of Bengal, literary references in the Vedic, Epic and sutra texts show evidence of cultural existence during the early historic period within the Bengal territory. These, however, rarely enlighten us on the chronology and geographical realities of this period. Again, within this Hindu-Buddhist period archaeological evidence is very scant to be able to describe the rulers preceding the Gupta, with the uncertainty removed to a degree during the Gupta rule due to the existence of pan-Indian chronologies. There is a preconception amongst historians that the period between the Gupta and the *Pāla* period was characterized by disorder and chaos, commonly known as *Matsyanyayam*. That is why the architectural history of Bengal starts from the *Pāla* period.

Recent findings suggest that such existing historical understandings and positions needs reassessing. Later Gupta and post-Gupta chronology show clear political and social activities during the pre *Pāla* period. Whereas political stability during the Gupta period is recognized and their contribution towards art and architecture is proved in other places of Indian subcontinent, presence of known kings such as *Narasimbāgupta*, *Vāṇyagupta*, *Śaśaṅka* and *Devakbadga* within the ‘grey’ later Gupta and post-Gupta periods show that Bengal had a continued degree of political stability.



Based on *Hsüan-Tsang's* account many historians believe that Bengal came in touch with Buddhism during Buddha's lifetime. *I-Ching* also noticed *Aśoka's* *stūpas* in *Tāmraliptī*, *Karṇasuvarṇa*, *Puṇḍravardhana* and *Samatāṭa* of Bengal which bore evidence of flourishing Buddhist practice during *Aśoka's* reign, which continued during the Sunga period; terracotta tablets found at *Tāmraliptī* bear its trace. This movement received further impetus during the *Kuṣāṇa* era when Buddhism received state religion status. Different sources including *Fa-Hien's* account suggest that a thriving state of Buddhism was present in Bengal during the Gupta period. Gupta patronization towards Buddhism was identified from contributions of Gupta rulers towards the Buddhist *saṅgha*. Later Gupta and post Gupta rulers continued their contribution which was acknowledged in literary texts and inscriptions. Moreover, some post-Gupta rulers were Buddhists and their role in the field of Buddhist architecture is recognized. During the post-Gupta period *Hsüan-tsang* found more than fifty Buddhist *vihāras* within the Bengal territory; further, he described few of them in some detail. These historical evidences suggest the pushing back of the history of architecture of Bengal towards the early historic period. At this point it can be said with some certainty that there was Buddhist architecture in Bengal before the *Pāla* period.

In contrast, archaeological findings in Bengal providing evidence of architectural remains is mainly dated as *Pāla* and post-*Pāla* with only a few exceptions. However, some of these examples suggest their earlier construction during the pre-*Pāla* period because of their architectural style. In the Indian subcontinent development of art and architecture always ran parallel and it is often difficult to distinguish sculpture from architecture given their complex interrelationship. In the *Kuṣāṇa* age sculpture dominated architecture but later in the Gupta period sculpture became a part of architecture (Goyal, 1993: 53). In the field of art and sculpture it is established that Buddhist *Pāla* art was a continuation of previous Gupta art, where post-Gupta period acted as the transition or a bridge (Asher, 1980: 69-100). Similar development pattern is observed in the

Buddhist shrine development of Bengal; here, rectangular Gupta shrine take a mature cruciform shape during the *Pāla* period through a morphological development.

Carefully analyzing archaeological excavation plans this study concludes that the overall planning of the *vihāra* complex remains largely unaltered in its basic composition. No major addition was observed in the residential spaces of the Buddhist *vihāra*. In terms of the basic characteristics and organization, Bengal *vihāra* followed the established structure and arrangements of a *vihāra* complex, similar to those built at *Nālandā* or other parts of India. Certain additions and alterations occur because of local influences and stylistic development. The major development was marked by changes in the wing shrine zones of the *vihāras*; such morphological growth was discussed thoroughly. The nature of Buddhist architecture during the early Bengal, Gupta, later Gupta and post-Gupta period was described in the light of archaeological findings and architectural trends.

As no extant remains of superstructure are identified for any early Buddhist architecture in Bengal, the first step in its architectural analysis should be the establishment of their architectural ground plan. It has been identified during the study that on most cases, even after a decade of excavation, no architectural analysis of the archaeological findings has been undertaken. This study includes this early stage to develop the conjectural architectural plan as a preparation for further analysis. Consequently, this study proposes few conjectural architectural ground plans for selected important remains, such as *Bharat Bhayna*, *Damdām Pireṣṭhan Dhibī*, temple 2 of *Bhāsu vihāra* and the central shrines of *Ānanda* and *Pabāṛpur vihāras*. To keep the study manageable, individual analysis to develop the conjectural architectural ground plans has not been included, but important aspects were discussed and available references were also included. After careful consideration of available sources this study argued that *Bharat Bhayna* was a rectangular shrine which was commonly believed to be the earliest cruciform shrine. Conjectural ground plan for the central shrine of *Pabāṛpur vihāra* also proposes a few changes from Naqī (Figure 5-39) and



Rashid's (Figure 5-37) proposal based on Dikshit's plan (Figure 5-33); this study proposes that the first offset of the structure was the staircase after three tiers of platform. Previously it was misunderstood by many scholars as a room considering likeness with Buddhist shrines of Bagan.

By analyzing the ground plans of the study zone a morphological development was observed that confirms the parallel development of art and architecture in Bengal during the studied period. This analysis was primarily based on archaeological reports and where archaeological findings (plans) are at their primary stage, then based on conjectural architectural plan. Consequently, this analysis suggests that, similar to sculptural development, the earliest trends could be discerned in the Gupta period. As the earlier remain of this study, *Bharat Bhayna*, was dated to late-Gupta period (c. fifth century AD), this study propose it as the matured form of the Gupta style.

The existence of many *pañchayatana* shrines in the early phase (Gupta period) was another important point recognized in this study. During the Gupta period *Magadha* was the centre of Buddhist activities and shrine architecture of Bengal developed keeping direct connection with them. Therefore similarities of proposed ground plan organization and virtual reconstruction of *Bharat Bhayna* with the *Mahābodhi* temple of Bodh Goya do not need further justification. The conjectural virtual model of the *Bharat Bhayna*, developed through careful consideration of multidisciplinary resources, shows its position as the bridge of transition between *Magadha* and far eastern Asia. Further study is needed to identify similarities and influences of Buddhist architecture between Bengal, South Asia and the Far East.

In the last part of the study, the focus was on the central shrine of *Pahārpur vibhāra* that marked the finishing point of the developmental trend identified earlier. A conjectural virtual reconstruction has been proposed for this shrine, which while having some similarities with earlier models proposed by Myer (Myer, 1961), Naqi (Naqi *et al.*, 1999), Samuel (Samuel, 2002), Akbar (Akbar, 2004) and Rashid (Rashid, 2007), proposes some important differences from these

earlier views established. Based on available resources and the developmental trends, this study identifies the relevance of all previous studies on the central shrine of *Pabāṛpur viḥāra* and finally presents a virtual reconstruction for this shrine. The result shows that at the earlier stage Buddhist architecture of Bengal had influence of Gupta architecture of Magadha but during the later Gupta and post-Gupta period a number of modifications and developments occurred and consequently they evolved as a unique style that was followed by later architecture at home and abroad. Therefore, it also coincides with *Pabāṛpur* becoming the changed centre of Buddhist activities during *Pāla* Bengal, away from *Magadha* of the Gupta era.

Finally, the result of this study on the early Buddhist architecture of Bengal introduces many questions that are either related to history of Bengal architecture or are connected to neighbouring countries of South and South-East Asia. The developmental trend recognized in this study is a small share of the large Buddhist architectural development movement that is also a part of the large subcontinental architectural development. The result will also, in turn, contribute to a better understanding of the concepts of Bengal and Eastern Indian architecture, which influenced later architecture of a wider region; especially Buddhist architecture of South and South-East Asia.

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## Appendix 2 GLOSSARY

**Aedicule:** Image or representation of a building (of a shrine) used as an architectural element

**Arya-Maṇjuśrī-Mulākalpa:** is one of the earliest examples of an extant Indian Buddhist *Tantra* which is closely aligned and identified with the *bodhisattva Maṇjuśrī*.

**Arākāṇ:** is an ancient kingdom. The elongated coastal stripe of Arākāṇ is situated on the western part of Myanmar proper and extends for almost 360 miles.

**Arāma/ārāma:** one kind of accommodation for *bhikkhus* approved by Buddhist texts

**Avalokiteshvara:** is a *bodhisattva* who embodies the compassion of all Buddhas. He is one of the more widely revered *bodhisattvas* in mainstream *Mahāyāna* Buddhism

**Avatār:**Descent; incarnation of a divinity, usually refers to *Vishnu*.

**Avāsa/āvāsa:** one kind of accommodation for *bhikkhus* approved by Buddhist texts

**Āmalaka:** 'myrobalan fruit' (without any impurities); ribbed crowing member in *Nāgara*

**Aṅga:** *Aṅga* was a kingdom that flourished on the eastern Indian subcontinent in the 6th century BC until taken over by *Magadha* in the same century. Counted among the 'sixteen great nations' (*solas Mahājanapadas*) in Buddhist texts.

**Arthashastra:** The *Arthashastra* is an ancient Indian treatise on state craft, economic policy and military strategy which identifies its author by the names '*Kautilya*' and '*Viśhṇugupta*', both names that are traditionally identified with *Chāṇakya* (c. 350–283 BC), who was a scholar at Takshashila and the teacher and guardian of Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of Mauryan Empire.

**Aśokāvadāna:** The *Aśokāvadāna* (Narrative of *Aśoka*) is a 2nd century CE text related to the legend of the Maurya Emperor Aśoka the Great. The *Aśokāvadāna* is a compilation of several such narratives. The *Aśokāvadāna* was subsequently translated into Chinese by Fa-Hien.

**Aṣṭasāhasrikā / Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā:** Western scholars have traditionally considered the earliest *sūtra* in the *Prajñāpāramitā* class to be the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* or "Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines", which was probably put in writing in the 1st century BCE.

**Antarāla:** antechamber in front of the *Garbhāgriha*, usually linking with *maṇḍapa*

**Baṅga:** *Baṅga* was a kingdom that flourished on the eastern Indian subcontinent in the 6th century BC until taken over by *Magadha* in the same century. Counted among the 'sixteen great nations' (*solasa Mahājanapadas*) in Buddhist texts.

**Baṅgālāḥ:** *Baṅgālāḥ* as a territorial name came to be used from the 14th century onwards, denoting the territory which now comprises the modern independent state of Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal.

**Bhadra:** principal projection on the wall of a structure, usually on cardinal axis

**Bhagavān:** literally means "possessing fortune, blessed, prosperous". It is used to indicate the Supreme Being.

**Bhakti:** is religious devotion in the form of active involvement of a devotee in worship of the divine

**Bhukti:** was a territorial division during the Gupta era

**Bhūmija:** one of the later, composite modes of *Nāgara* shrine

**Bhikkhu:** Buddhist monk.

**Bodhi Gaya:** Site of the Buddha's Enlightenment in north eastern India

**Bodhisattva, Bodhisatta:** A Buddha-to-be; one who has resolved to attain enlightenment for the helping of his fellow-men.

**Brahma:** One of the three principal Hindu gods, with four faces. Three are usually shown in painting and sculpture. In Buddhism, the inhabitants of the higher heavens have the form of this divinity, and are called Brahmas.

**Champā:** *Champā* was the capital of *Anga*

**Chāṇḍradwipa:** The ancient and medieval name of Barisal was Chāṇḍradwipa. Now it is a small region in Barisal District, Bangladesh. Chāṇḍradwipa was successively ruled by the Mauryas, Guptas and the Palas towards the end of 10th Century A.D.

**Chāṇḍraketugarh:** *Chāṇḍraketugarh* is an archaeological site located beside the Bidyadhari river, about 35 km north-east of Kolkata, India, in the district of North 24 parganas, near the township of Berachampa and the Haroa Road railhead.

**Chaitya:** A chaitya is a Buddhist or Jain shrine including a stupa. In modern texts on Indian architecture, the term *chaitya-griha* is often used to denote an assembly or prayer hall that houses a stupa.



**Daṇḍābhukṭi:** *Daṇḍābhukṭi* was an ancient and medieval region/ territory spread across what are now Bankura, Hooghly, Paschim Medinipur and Purba Medinipur districts in the Indian state of West Bengal. In late mediaeval period Daṇḍābhukṭi was part of Bardhaman *bhukṭi*.

**Daśāvatāra:** *Daśāvatāra* refers to the ten major incarnations of Vishnu, the Hindu god of preservation and life.

**Devapaṇḍita:** was the capital of *Samatāṣa*, at the southern end of the *Maināmati* hill near Comilla in present Bangladesh

**Dhamma, Dharma:** Truth, teaching, doctrine, righteousness, piety, morality, justice, nature, all things and states conditioned or unconditioned, etc.

**Dharmaguptaka:** The *Dharmaguptaka* are one of the eighteen or twenty early Buddhist schools, depending on one's source. They are said to have originated from *Mahāsākas* sect.

**Dharmarājikā:** The *Dharmarājikā* is a large Buddhist stupa in the area of Taxila, Pakistan. It is thought that it was established by the Maurya emperor Aśoka in the 3rd century BCE around relics of the Buddha.

**Dhībī:** The main mound

**Drāvida:** Southern language of temple architecture

**Gandhāra:** is the name of an ancient kingdom (*Mahajanapada*), located in northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan.

**Gauda:** *Gauda* was a territory located in Bengal in ancient and mediaeval times, spreads over the northern part of West Bengal and Bangladesh

**Garbhāgriha:** the sanctum of the temple

**Harikēṣa:** *Harikēṣa* was a kingdom in ancient Bengal encompassing much of the eastern regions of Bengal.

**Harṣhavarḍhana:** *Harṣha* or *Harṣha Varḍhana* or *Harṣhavarḍhana* (c. 590—647) was an Indian emperor who ruled northern India from 606 to 647. At the height of his power his kingdom spanned the Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bengal, Orissa and the entire Indo-Gangetic plain north of the Narmada River.

**Hīnayāna;** *Hīnayāna* is a Sanskrit and Pāli term literally meaning: the "Inferior Vehicle", "Deficient Vehicle", the "Abandoned Vehicle", or the "Defective Vehicle". The term appeared around the 1st or 2nd century as an alternate of *Theravāda* Buddhism.

**Janpadas:** Ancient kingdoms of India. According to literary sources there were 16 *janapadas* in Indian subcontinent.

**Kaliṅga:** was an early state in central-eastern India, which comprised most of the modern state of Orissa/Utkal, as well as the Andhra region of the bordering state of Andhra Pradesh.

**Kapilāvāṣṭu:** is the name of a region of the ancient Shakyas kingdom that is considered a holy pilgrimage place for Buddhists in Lumbini, Nepal.

**Karṇasuvarṇa:** *Karṇasuvarṇa* was the capital of Śaśaṅka, one important Hindu king of ancient Bengal who ruled in the 7th century.

**Kaṅkagrāmbhukṭi:** *Kaṅkagrāmbhukṭi* was a *Bhukṭi* (medieval region/ territory) spread across what are now Birbhum, Bardhaman and Murshidabad districts in the Indian state of West Bengal.

**Kuṣāṇa:** Kushan Empire

**Kāmarupa:** *Kāmarupa*, also called Pragjyotisha, was the first historical kingdom in Assam that existed between 350 and 1140 CE i.e. for almost 800 years. It covered the entire Brahmaputra river valley and, at times, North Bengal and parts of Bangladesh.

**Kāntaji/ Kāntaji Temple:** *Kāntaji* Temple at *Kāntanagar*, is a late-medieval Hindu temple in Dinajpur, Bangladesh; built by *Mahārāja* Pran Nāth. It boasts one of the greatest examples on Terracotta architecture in Bengal and once had nine spires.

**Kāśyapīya:** *Kāśyapīya* was one of the early Buddhist schools in India. The name *Kāśyapīya* is believed to be derived from *Kāśyapa*, one of the original missionaries sent by King *Aśoka* to the Himavanta country. The *Kāśyapīyas* were also called the Haimavatas.

**Latina:** the basic unitary mode of *Nāgara* shrine

**Mahābhārata:** The *Mahābhārata* is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the other one is the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Traditionally, the authorship of the *Mahābhārata* is attributed to Vyasa. The origins of the story probably fall between the eighth and ninth centuries BC but the text probably reached its final form by the early Gupta period (c. fourth century AD).

**Mahājanapada:** literally "great realms", were ancient Indian kingdoms or countries. Ancient Buddhist texts like *AnguttaraNikaya* make frequent reference to sixteen great kingdoms and republics which had evolved and flourished in a belt stretching from *Gandhāra* in the northwest to *Anga* in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent

**Mahārāja:** see *Rāja*

**Mahārājādhirājā:** Great Prince over Princes, a title of honour, one degree higher than *Mahārāja*.

**Mahāsthān:** see *Mahāsthāngarh*

**Mahāsthāngarh:** *Mahāsthāngarh* is one of the earliest urban archaeological site so far discovered in Bangladesh. The village *Mahāsthān* in Shibganj thana of Bogra District contains the remains of an ancient city which was called *Puṇḍranagar* or *Puṇḍravardhanapura* in the territory of *Puṇḍravardhana*. *Mahāsthāngarh* dates back to at least the 3rd century BC.

**Mahāyāna:** 'Great Vehicle', form of Buddhism of later development, now mainly followed in China, Japan, Korea and Tibet.

**Mahīśāsaka:** *Mahīśāsaka* is one of the early Buddhist schools according to some records. Its origins may go back to the dispute in the Second Buddhist Council. The Dharmaguptaka sect is thought to have branched out from Mahīśāsaka sect toward the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 1st century BC.

**Majjhimadesa:** The central region of *Jambudīpa*. In commentaries the *Majjhimadesa* is extended to include the whole of *Jambudīpa*.

**Maināmati:** *Maināmati* is an isolated low, dimpled range of hills, dotted-with more than 50 ancient Buddhist settlements of the 8th to 12th century A.D. It is extended through the centre of the district of Comilla. *Maināmati* is located almost 8 miles from the town of Comilla, Bangladesh.

**Mathurā:** Mathura is a city in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. It is the administrative centre of Mathura District of Uttar Pradesh. During the ancient period, Mathura was an economic hub, located at the junction of important caravan routes. Today, it is a fast expanding city with over 2.5 million residents.

**Matsyanyayam:** In Sanskrit term *Matsyanyayam* is derived from *Matsya* and *Nyayam* as the rise of disorder like the larger fish shallows smaller one. In the history of mediaeval Bengal, it is a time frame between the death of Śaśaṅka and before the rise of Pala rulers. Many historians described there was no law and order during this period.

**Maurya:** The Maurya Empire was a geographically extensive Iron Age historical power in ancient India, ruled by the Mauryan dynasty from 321 to 185 BCE. Originating from the kingdom of Magadha in the Indo-Gangetic plains.

**Mañtrayāna:** see *Vajrayāna*

**Maṭṣaṇnaya** see *Matsyanyayam*

**Mālwa:** Malwa is a natural region in west-central northern India occupying a plateau of volcanic origin. Historical Malwa region includes districts of western Madhya Pradesh and parts of south-eastern Rajasthan.

**Mṛigaśikhāvana:** *Mṛigaśikhāvana*, near to *Nālandā* in Northern India, was the site of a Buddhist temple built for Chinese pilgrims by *Mahārāja Śrī Gupta*, the first monarch of the Gupta Empire. Evidence for this temple's existence comes from the account written by the Chinese monk I-tsing around 690 AD, who claimed that Śrī Gupta endowed it with the revenue from 40 villages.

**Mahāvihāra:** The term *Mahāvihāra* derived from Pali "Great Monastery" to mark an important and large monastery.

**Mastaka:** the crowning element in the *Nāgara* temples comprising of three parts

**Mantra:** A mantra is a sound, syllable, word, or group of words that is considered capable of "creating transformation" (spiritual transformation). Its use and type varies according to the school and philosophy associated with the mantra.

**Maṇḍala:** is a Sanskrit word that means "circle". These mandalas, concentric diagrams, have spiritual and ritual significance in both Buddhism and Hinduism

**Maṇḍapa:** A *maṇḍapa* in Indian architecture is a pillared outdoor hall or pavilion for public rituals.

**Nandangaṛh / Lauṛiā Nandangaṛh:** *Lauṛiā Nandangaṛh* is a village about 14 km from Shikarpur and 28 km from Bettiah in West Champaran district of Bihar state in northern India. It contains the interesting ruins of a huge stupa, where the ashes of Lord Buddha were enshrined.

**Nāgara/ Nagara:** Northern language of temple architecture

**Nāgār-junakoṇḍā:** Nagarjunakonda, meaning Nagarjuna Hill, is a historical Buddhist town is now an island located near Nagarjuna Sagar in Nalgonda district in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

**Nālandā:** *Nālandā* was an ancient center of higher learning in Bihar, India. The site of Nalanda is located in the Indian state of Bihar, about 88 kilometers south east of Patna, and was a religious center of learning from the fifth or sixth century AD to 1197 AD

**Navaratna:** Navaratna is a Sanskrit compound word meaning "nine gems". In shrine architecture, navaratna identifies a particular shrine type which have nine *śikhara* on top.

**Odantpuri:** Odantapuri, also called Odantapura or Uddandapura, was a Buddhist vihara in what is now Bihar, India. It was established by king *Dharmapala* of Pala dynasty in the 8th century, was situated in Magadha.

**Pahāpur:** The best known Buddhist *vihāra* in the Indian Subcontinent and is one of the most important archaeological sites in Bangladesh.

**Paramabhagavaṭa:** Devout worshipper of Vishnu. Many Gupta emperor adopted this title to express their religious orientation.

**Phāmsanā:** shrine mode with pyramidal superstructure of tiered eaves mouldings.

**Prajñāpāramitā:** *Prajñāpāramitā* combines the Sanskrit words *prajñā* ("wisdom") with *pāramitā* ("perfection") which means "the Perfection of (Transcendent) Wisdom". *Prajñāpāramitā* is a central concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism and its practice and understanding are taken to be indispensable elements of the Bodhisattva Path.

**Puṇḍra:** see *Puṇḍravardhaṇa*

**Puṇḍranagar:** see *Mahāsthāngarṣ*

**Puṇḍravardhaṇa:** Puṇḍravardhaṇa was a territory located in North Bengal (mainly in what is now northern part of Bangladesh and West Bengal) in ancient and medieval time.

**Pāli:** *Pāli* is a Middle Indo-Aryan language of Prakrit group. It is best known as the language of many earliest extant Buddhist scriptures.

**Pāṭalipuṭra:** *Pāṭalipuṭra* was a city in ancient India which was located by modern-day Patna, Bihar. Originally built by Ajatashatru in 490 BC as a small fort (*Pāṭaligrama*) near the River Gange, and later become the capital of ancient *Mahājanapadas* kingdom of Magadha.

**Pañcharatna:** Ratna temple with five ratna aedicules, four on four comers of roof level

**Pradakshina:** *ambulation*

**Praśāsti:** Praise

**Praśāstilipi:** Words of praise

**Raktamṛttikā:** *Raktamṛttikā Mahāvihāra*, Hiuen-Tsung mentioned as *Lo-to-mo-chi*, was an important centre of learning of *Vajrayāna* Buddhists near *Karṇasuvarṇa*. It has been identified at Rajbaridanga, which is about 2.4 km from *Karṇasuvarṇa* railway station.

**Rājgir:** The city of Rajgir / Rājagṛha was the first capital of the kingdom of Magadha. Present day it is a city and a notified area in Nalanda district in the Indian state of Bihar.

**Rājmālā:** Rajmala is the ancient royal chronicle of the Kings of Tripura. It has been written in Bengali since the 14th century AD.

**Rājā:** is an Indian term for a monarch or princely ruler

**Rājāpuṭra:** Prince

**Rāmāyaṇa:** The Ramayana is an ancient Sanskrit epic. It is ascribed to the Hindu sage Valmiki and forms an important part of the Hindu canon, considered to be *itihāsa*. The Ramayana is one of the two great epics of India, the other being the Mahabharata.

**Rāṛh:** Rarh region was an area in ancient and mediaeval Bengal that lies between the Chota Nagpur Plateau on the West and the Ganges Delta on the East. Although the boundaries of the region have been defined differently according to various sources throughout history, today it is mainly coextensive with the state of West Bengal also comprising some portions of the state of Jharkand and Bihar in India.

**Ratna:** Ratna is a Sanskrit word for jewel or gemstone.

**Samataṭa:** Samataṭa was a kingdom in ancient and mediaeval Bengal, located at the mouth of the Brahmaputra river (near Comilla) in the south east of Bengal.

**Samgha:** see *Saṅgha*

**Sarvāstivāda:** The Sarvāstivāda were an early school of Buddhism that the sect that speaks of the existence of everything.

**Saṅgha:** *Saṅgha* a Pali or Sanskrit word can be translated roughly as "association" or "assembly" or "community". In Buddhism most commonly, *Saṅgha* means the monastic *saṅgha* of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns. Buddhists traditionally consider monastic life to provide the environment most conducive to advancing toward enlightenment, and the *saṅgha* is responsible for maintaining, translating, advancing, and spreading the teachings of the Buddha.

**Saṅghārāma:** *Saṅghārāma* is a Sanskrit word meaning "temple" or "monastery", the place where Buddhist monastic community (*Saṅgha*) dwells.

**Saṅnāth:** Sarnath is the deer park where Gautama Buddha first taught the Dharma, and where the Buddhist Saṅgha came into existence through the enlightenment. Sarnath is located 13 kilometres north-east of Varanasi, in Uttar Pradesh, India.

**Sthaviravāda:** Sthaviravāda was one of the early Buddhist schools, which literally means "Teaching of the elders". It was one of the two main movements in early Buddhism that arose from the Great Schism in pre-sectarian Buddhism, the other being that of the *Mahāsāṃghika* school.

**Stūpa:** A *stūpa* is a mound-like structure containing Buddhist relics, typically the ashes of deceased, used by Buddhists as a place of meditation.

**Suhma:** Suhma was an eastern kingdom located in regions now occupied by West Bengal, India and Bangladesh. This kingdom was mentioned in the epic Mahabharata.

**Sāñchi:** Sanchi is a small village in Raisen District of the state of Madhya Pradesh, India, it is located 46 km north east of Bhopal, and 10 km from Besnagar and Vidisha in the central part of the state of Madhya Pradesh. It is the location of several Buddhist monuments dating from the 3rd century BC to the 12th CE and is one of the important places of Buddhist pilgrimage.

**Sātavāhana:** A royal Indian dynasty based from Dharanikota and Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh as well as Junnar (Pune) and Prathisthan (Paithan) in Maharashtra. The territory of the empire covered much of northern India from 230 BC onward.

**Śikhara:** a Sanskrit word translating literally to "mountain peak", refers to the rising tower in the shrine architecture of North India. *Śikhara* over the sanctum sanctorum where the presiding deity is enshrined is the most prominent and visible part of a North Indian shrine.

**Śikhara-śirsha-bhadra:** The *Bhadra* (*Phāmsanā*) shrine surmounted by *Latina* (*Śikhara*). This type probably a later development of Eastern Indian shrine in Bengal, which is a conjugation of *Latin* and *Phāmsanā* mode.

**Śrihatṭa:** The medieval commercial center of north eastern Bengal, presently named as Sylhet.

**Śikhari:** It is a type of north Indian Nāgar shrine architecture developed from *Latina* (*Śikhara*) shrine, then composed with a number of *Śikhara* forms clustered together.

**Suvaṇṇa:** Gold

**Theravāda:** The doctrine of the elder; teaching of the elder; the school of Buddhism.

**Tāmralipti:** *Tāmralipta*, or *Tamralipti* was the name of an ancient city on the Bay of Bengal believed by scholars to be on the site of Tamluk in modern-day India. It is believed that *Tāmralipti* was a port since the Mauryan period.

**Triratha:** *tri* is three and *ratha* (*rathaka*) means offsets formed on plan. *Triratha* is a type of plan form with one central projection; hence three parts on the wall

**Vaishnavism:** *Vaishnavism* is one of the major branches of Hinduism along with Shaivism, Smartism, and Shaktism. It is focused on the veneration of Vishnu. *Vaishnavites*, or the followers of the Supreme Lord Vishnu, lead a way of life promoting differentiated monotheism, which gives importance to Lord Vishnu and His ten incarnations.



**Vajrayāna:** *Vajrayāna* is also known as Tantric Buddhism, *Tantrayāna*, *Mañtrayāna*, Secret Mantra, Esoteric Buddhism and the Diamond Vehicle. *Vajrayāna* is a complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought and practice which evolved over several centuries.

**Valabhi:** mode of *Nāgara* shrine with barrel vaulted roof

**Vareṇḍra:** *Vareṇḍra* was a region of Bengal, was spread across north western part of Bangladesh. It included the *Puṇḍravardhaṇa* or *Puṇḍra* Kingdom region.

**Vaṅga:** *Vaṅga* was a kingdom located in the eastern part of the Indian Subcontinent, comprising part of West Bengal, India and present-day Bangladesh.

**Varḍhamānabhuṅkti also Bardhamanbhukti:** Bardhamanbhukti was an ancient and medieval region spread across what are now Bardhaman and Bankura districts in the Indian state of West Bengal.

**Vikrampuṛa also Bikrampur:** Bikrampur is a historic region in Bengal. The region is famous for its early Buddhist scholarships and in the later period for its cultural influences. It is situated 12 miles south of Dhaka, the modern-day capital of Bangladesh, lies in the Munshiganj District.

**Vikramsilā viḥāra:** *Vikramsilā viḥāra* was one of the two most important centres of Buddhist learning in India along with *Nālandā mahāvihāra*. *Vikramsilā* was established by King *Dharmapāla* (783 to 820) in response to a supposed decline in the quality of scholarship at *Nālandā*. Atisha, the renowned pandita, is sometimes listed as a notable abbot.

**Vīdīśā:** *Vīdīśā* is a city in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India, located near the state capital Bhopal. *Vīdīśā* is the administrative headquarters of Vidisha District. The city was also known as Bhilsa during the medieval period.

**Vihāra:** *Vihāra* is the Sanskrit and Pali term for a Buddhist monastery. It originally meant "a secluded place in which to walk", and referred to "dwellings" or "refuges" used by wandering monks during the rainy season.

**Vihārikās:** Small *Vihāras*

**vinaya:** The Vinaya (a word in Pāli as well as in Sanskrit, with literal meaning 'leading out', 'education', 'discipline') is the regulatory framework for the Buddhist monastic community, or *saṅgha*, based on the canonical texts called *Vinaya Pitaka*.

**Yāna:** *Yāna* refers to a mode or method of spiritual practice in Buddhism, and in particular to divisions of various schools of Buddhism according to their type of practice.

**Zamiñdār:** A *zamiñdār* was an aristocrat, typically hereditary, who held enormous tracts of land and held control over his peasants, from whom the *zamiñdār*s reserved the right to collect tax. Over time, they took princely and royal titles such as Maharaja (Great King), Raja (King), Nawab (Lord), Mirza (Prince), Chowdhury (Lord), and many others.

## Appendix 3

### A short note on the chronology and historical significant of Gupta dynasty

The period of the imperial Gupta (c. 319-495 AD) is generally considered to be the 'golden age' of Indian history. This period also saw artistic excellence. It is interesting that the Gupta art apparently more limited in eastern India than in the central part, by contrast all major shrines and *vihāra* site belongs to central India. Perhaps the extant monuments tell only part of the story; epigraphic evidences indicate the existence of many monuments that no longer remain (Asher, 1980: 15). During the Gupta age the evolution of sculptural art that developed in northern India had left a definite stamp on the sculptural art tradition of Bengal. A few examples recovered from north Bengal clearly show this evolution. The Gupta School distinctly inspired the Bengal School of sculptural art in the Pala period (Weiner, 1963: 3). The Gupta period is also remarkable for religious toleration. The imperial Gupta monarchs were followers of Brahmanical religion, but they patronised Buddhism, Jainism, and other religious communities and the people of the period enjoyed an environment of religious toleration and mutual coexistence of religions.

The Gupta dynasty forms an important chapter in the history of early Bengal. Gupta rule spread over most parts of Bengal probably in the reign of *Chandragupta* I (c. 319-335 AD) or *Samudragupta* (c. 335-380 AD), towards the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century AD. Inscriptions (*prasaṣtilipi*), copper plates, coins, literary evidence, and foreign accounts bear testimony to the existence of Gupta rule in Bengal. It is evident that in the vast Gupta Empire Bengal was an important province under a strong benevolent central authority. Peace, wealth and prosperity were manifest for a considerable time and Bengal enjoyed the benefits of being a part of the all-Indian empire and Bengal had a participation in the all-Indian trade. Introduction of a large number of gold coins proves economic prosperity of Bengal and during this period gold and silver coins were brought into currency throughout Bengal. At that time Bengal had trading links with south-east Asia and China. The discovery of a large number of imitation Gupta coins, during the later Gupta and post-Gupta periods, from different places of Bengal proves that Bengal enjoyed the benefits of a monetary economy.

Evidence on the origin and antecedents of the Gupta family is limited, as it seems to have emerged from obscure beginnings. Scholars differ regarding the original home of the imperial Guptas. First evidence of the Gupta origin comes from a foreign source; *I-Ching* (673-693 AD) described a shrine built by *Śrīgupta* (c. 240-280 AD), the founder of Gupta dynasty. Based on the location of that stated shrine, D.C. Ganguly, R.C. Majumdar and S. Chattopadhyaya suggested the origin of the Guptas in Murshidabad, Rajshahi and Malda districts of Bengal, respectively (Ganguly, 1987: 11). However, many scholars hold contrary opinions on this theory and this theory needs more evidence to be justified. Anyway, whatever the origin of the Guptas, it is more certain that the territory of *Śrīgupta* stretched to the east up to *Vareṇdra* while it

extended in the west as far as *Prayāga* and *Sāketa* (Ganguly, 1987: 12). So a part of Bengal was within the jurisdiction of the Gupta Empire from the beginning.

Later rulers of this dynasty conquered many small states and were given the title of *Mahārāja* (Thapar, 2004: 282). The dynasty came into its own with the accession of *Chandragupta I* (c. 319-335 AD) who was described as *Mahārājādhirāja*. The king and queen type of coins, bearing the name of *Chandragupta I* and *Kumāradevi*, have been discovered from several places including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and *Chandraketugarh* of West Bengal (Ganguly, 1987: 36). The Delhi pillar inscription referring to *Chandragupta's* victory over a Bengali chief probably indicates his control over *Puṇḍravardhana* (Mookerji, 2007: 24). These references clearly suggest his control over parts of Bengal. *Chandragupta I* marked his accession to the throne of Magadha by founding an era, widely known as the Gupta era, of which the first year was 319-320 AD (Mookerji, 2007: 15).

*Śamudragupta* (c. 335-380 AD) claimed that he was appointed by his father, *Chandragupta I*, to succeed him in about 335 AD (Thapar, 2004: 283). The name *Śamudragupta* is to be taken as a title he had acquired by his conquest which means that he was 'protected by the sea' up to which his domination was extended (Mookerji, 2007: 17). He did succession of conquests that made him so powerful that the states on the frontiers of his empire, where kingdoms or republics, were anxious to enter into friendly relations with him by rendering satisfaction of the demand of his imperial administration. According to Allahabad *prasaṅgi* among these frontier kingdoms five were eastern Indian; *Samatāṭa*, *Davāka*, *Kāmarūpa*, Nepal and *Karttīpura*. The location of these frontier kingdoms shows that Bengal proper excluding *Samatāṭa* was part of the Gupta empire during his reign.

Alike the antecedence during the reign of *Śamudragupta*, the imperial territory of Bengal was divided into some well-defined units like *bhukti*, *visaya*, *maṇḍala*, *vithi* and *grama* etc. Each of the units seems to have an *adhikarana* or office of its own at its headquarters. *Bhukti* was the largest unit of administration and was governed by a deputy of the king. From epigraphic records and Gupta inscriptions few names of such *bhuktis* is known that belongs to Bengal territory; *Puṇḍravardhana*<sup>1</sup> and *Varḍhamāna*<sup>2</sup>.

Of all the Gupta kings, *Chandragupta II* (c. 375-414 AD), the son of *Śamudragupta* had shown exceptional chivalrous and heroic qualities. He maintained his ancestor's kingdom successfully and he is remembered for his patronage to literature and the arts (Thapar, 2004: 285-286). Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien, who travelled India during the reign of *Chandragupta II*, surprisingly never mentioned his name (Mookerji, 2007: 56).

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<sup>1</sup> *Puṇḍravardhana* was the whole of north Bengal

<sup>2</sup> *Varḍhamāna* was the southern part of ancient *Rādhā*.

During the reign of *Kumāragupta* (c. 414-445 AD), the son and successor of *Chandragupta* II, first hint arose of a new invasion from the North West. A branch of Hunas<sup>3</sup> were threatening to cross the Hindu Kush Mountains. The Huna threat on the Indian frontier continued for the next hundreds years and *Kumāragupta* defended his kingdom successfully (Thapar, 2004: 286).

The Damodarpur Copperplate (dated 543 AD) inferred that *Mahārājāpuṭra-deva-bhaṭṭārakā*, may be either a prince or a member of the imperial family, was appointed as the governor of the *Puṇḍravardhana bhukti* sometimes that shows importance of this region during *Kumāragupta*'s reign.

*Skaṇḍagupta* (c. 455-467 AD), the son and successor of *Kumāragupta*, had to continue battle against the barbarians and also had to face domestic problem of his empire (Thapar, 2004: 286). As crown prince he was deputed to deal with the enemies, Pushyamitras, who had gathered all their strength and resources against them. Again, after his father's death when Gupta fortune was overwhelmed he restored it by his own conquests (Mookerji, 2007: 92). According to the Bhitari inscription, besides restoring the Gupta power he increased it by fresh conquests. He came into close conflict with the Hunas and subduing them. After his death around 467 AD the central authority of the Gupta Empire declined at an increasing pace.

The immediate successor of *Skaṇḍagupta* was *Pūrugupta* (c. 467-469 AD) who was his brother that was confirmed by the Bhitari inscription which states *Mahārājādhīrājā Śrī Pūrugupta* was the son of *Mahārājādhīrājā Śrī Kumāragupta*. *Pūrugupta* came to the throne as an old man and he did not reign long; he died before c. 473 AD when his son *Kumāragupta* II was ruling (Mookerji, 2007: 102).

A major blow came at the end of the fifth century when the Hunas successfully broke through into northern India and Gupta power was eroded over the next fifty years before it gave way to a number of small kingdoms (Thapar, 2004: 286). After *Pūrugupta* two more kings probably enjoyed the Gupta sovereignty; *Kumāragupta* II (c. 473-476 AD) and *Budhagupta* (c. 476-495 AD); the former was immediately succeeded after a very short reign of only three years by *Budhagupta*.

The Gupta empire under *Budhagupta* did not shrink in size rather extended from Malwa to northern Bengal, from the *Kalindi* to the *Gangā*. *Budhagupta* recovered the position and prestige of Gupta Empire after the dark days following the death of *Skaṇḍagupta* (c. 455-467 AD) (Mookerji, 2007: 118).

The title of the high official was *Uparika* during the time of *Kumāragupta* I while Maharaja was added to it during the reign of *Budhagupta*. However, very little is known regarding the way in which a provincial governor carried out his administration. Probably the provincial governor was responsible directly to the king because his appointment was subject to the choice or approval of the latter. The *Paharpur*

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<sup>3</sup> The white Huns were a Central Asian nomadic confederation whose precise origins and composition remain obscure. According to Chinese chronicles, they were originally a tribe living to the north of the Great Wall and were known as Hoa or Hoa-tun. Elsewhere they were called White Huns, known to the Greeks as Hephthalite and the Indians as the Huna

copperplate of the Gupta year 159 (479 AD), states that the *bhukti* of *Puṇḍravardhana* had its headquarters at the town of *Puṇḍravardhana*.

## Appendix 4

### A short note on political geography of Bengal during Pāla and Sena

The Political and religious base of the post-Gupta period ultimately makes room for the *Pāla* to step in. The political situation and the psychological climate of the day are reflected in an early-Pāla record, the Khalimpur copper plate inscription of king *Dharmapāla* (c. 766-808 AD), in which it is stated that *Gopāla* (c. 739-766 AD) was made king by the people (Banerji, 1915: 47). *Gopāla* rose to power in *Vareṇdra*<sup>4</sup> in about 741 AD and gradually brought almost all parts of Bengal as well as *Magadha* under his sway. He was a fervent Buddhist and credited to have revived the faith after it suffered at the hands of *Śaśaṅka*. His rule ended around 766 AD.

*Dharmapāla* (c. 766-808 AD), the son and successor of *Gopāla*, inherited an apparently well-knit kingdom and ventured for an expansion of Pāla imperialism westwards. The most important event in the reign of *Dharmapāla* is his conquest of northern India (Banerji, 1915: 50). The Khalimpur copper plate inscription of *Dharmapāla* attests to his over-lordship over a large portion of India when it states that the rulers of north Indian states of Bhoja, Matsya, Madra, Kuru, Yadu, Yavana, Avanti, Gandhara and Kira assembled at the imperial *darbar* held at Kannauj under *Dharmapāla*. Thus *Dharmapāla* is likely to have conquered or overrun eastern Punjab and Sindh (Kuru and Yadu), western Punjab and the North-Western Frontier Provinces (Yavana and Gandhara), Kangra (Ktra), Malwa (Avanti), and northeastern Rajputana (Bhoja and Matsya) (Banerji, 1915: 51).

As a devout Buddhist, *Dharmapāla* is said to have patronized the construction of two monumental Buddhist *mahāvihāras*, *Vikramsila* in eastern Bihar and *Pahārpur* in Rajshahi district of Bangladesh, and also supported the earlier Buddhist institutions of Bengal and Bihar, at *Nālandā*, *Odantpuri*, *Rājgir*, Bodhgaya, *Jagaddālpuṛ* and *Tāmralipti*.

*Devapāla* succeeded his father *Dharmapāla* in about 808 AD and ruled over an extensive empire up to c. 845 AD. His reign has been regarded as the high watermark of *Pāla* imperialism. During his reign the limits of the empire created by his father was maintained and he extended his sway over Assam and Orissa (Huntington, 1984: 40). *Devapāla* was succeeded by *Vigrahapāla* (c. 861-866 AD), his nephew (Majumdar, 1943: 126) but his reign was not significant. *Vigrahapāla* was succeeded by his son *Nārāyaṇpāla* (c. 866-920 AD) (Banerji, 1915: 62). After *Devapāla* the *Pāla* Empire faced decadence under frequently changing rulers. Under *Nārāyaṇpāla* (c. 866-920 AD) the Empire was limited to Magadha and north Bengal. *Nārāyaṇpāla* was succeeded by *Rājyapāla* (c. 920-952) and then *Gopāla* II (c. 952-969 AD) took the

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<sup>4</sup> *Vareṇdra* was ancient cultural sub-region in Bengal situated in the north-western delta north of Ganges river and included the territories now constituting the districts of Malda, Pabna, Rajshahi, Bogra, Dinajpur and Rangpur.



throne and later was succeeded by *Vigrahapāla* II (c. 969-980 AD); very little is known about their reigns (Ganguly, 1994: 30).

*Mahipāla* I (c. 980-1028 AD), the son of *Vigrahapāla* II succeed his father around 980 CE. The records of his reign clearly indicate his success in restoring the fallen fortunes of his family and also the expansion of the *Pāla* dominion in northern and western Bengal and northern Orissa. The reign of *Mahipāla* I came to an end around 1028 AD and under the next two successive *Pāla* kings, *Nayāpāla* (c. 1028-1043 CE) and *Vigrahapāla* III (c. 1043-1069 CE), the royal authority was sufficiently weakened in eastern India and southern Bengal, though *Magadha* was still in its full grip. Later *Mahipāla* II succeeded *Vigrahapāla* III around 1069 AD. From *Nārāyaṇpāla* to *Mahipāla* II, the kings who ruled in succession were all related to their respective previous rulers as son (Ganguly, 1994: 30).

The death of *Vigrahapāla* III saw a scramble for the throne and later revolt of the Kaivartas from present Kalna region of the Burdwan district that captured the *Vareṇdra* region from the *Pālas*. *Rāmpāla* ascended the throne in around 1073 CE and with the help of his allies of the smaller secondary states, whom he astutely gathered round him, he recovered his paternal kingdom by defeating Kaivartas.

In the *Vareṇdra* region *Rāmpāla* established his new capital at *Rāmāvatī*. The *Varmaṇ* kings of east Bengal eventually submitted to him and the rulers of Orissa (Utkal and Kalinga) and *Kāmaruṇa* followed suit. *Rāmpāla* gave a fresh lease of life to his decaying kingdom but after his death in 1126 AD, the decline of his kingdom started and after 1175 CE only nominal rulers of *Pala* dynasty ruled over parts of *Magadha*.

From the above discussion it can be observed that the *Pāla* dynasty ruled over an extensive region of eastern India for more than four centuries and during the reign of its two celebrated members, *Dharmapāla* and *Devapāla*, the empire reached the zenith of power, prestige and glory. But except these two celebrated kings none of the others had a proper control over the *Samatāṣa*; probably post-Gupta rulers continued to rule there. But it is certain that they had a long time control over the northern and western parts of Bengal and *Magadha*.

The previous small state status of Bengal took the shape of a grand empire during this period. Peace, prosperity and political stability which the four-century long *Pāla* rule gave to the ancient Gauda and *Magadha* fostered an all-round cultural development, and in particular set a new trend in the creative areas of architecture, sculpture and paintings. During this period, Buddhism as a state cult spread into neighbouring lands, in particular to Tibet, Burma, Cambodia, and Java, where monumental Buddhist shrines appear to have been modelled on prototypes developed in Bengal and Bihar.

During the decline of the *Pāla*, a family with the names of its members ending in '*Seṇa*' was rising in power. The manner in which the *Seṇa* dynasty established itself as a ruling power is not very clear. The Deopara inscription states that *Vijayaseṇa* (c. 1096-1159 AD) attacked the king of Gauda, who was probably *Madanapāla*, the son of *Rāmpāla*, with great force and *Madanapāla* seems to have been defeated by

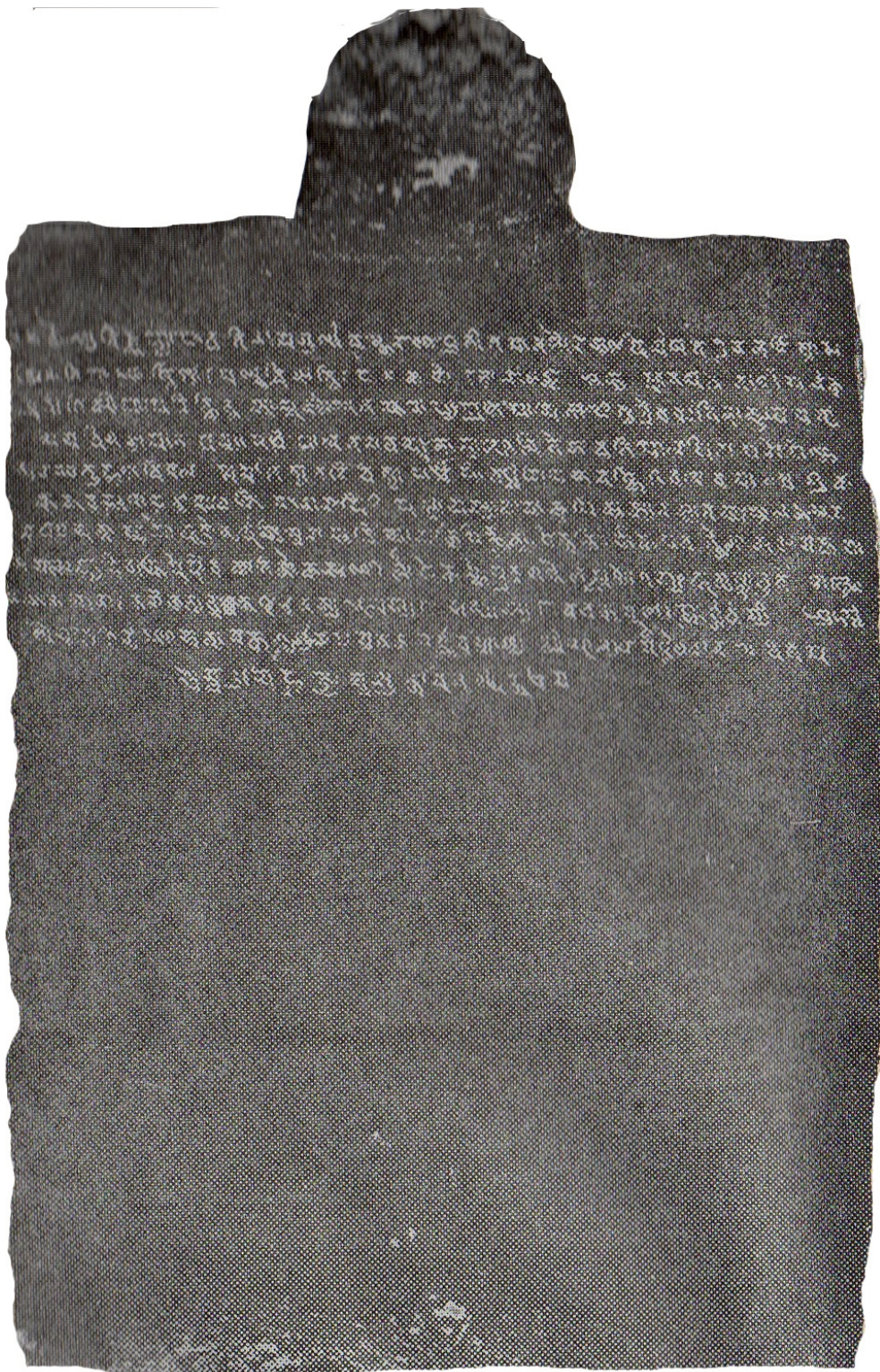
*Vijayasena* sometime after the year 1108 AD (Banerji, 1915: 103). *Vijayasena* was the grandson of *Sāmantasena* (c. 1060-1080 CE), who supposedly settled on the banks of Ganges in *Rādhā* and was a feudatory of the *Pāla* king, *Vijrahapāla* III (c. 1043-1069 AD). Earlier *Vijayasena* helped *Rāmpāla* in his campaign against Kaivarta rebels from north *Rādhā* and remained an ally of the *Pāla* king. Later he defeated his son and declared independence. Of Kshatriya origin, the *Senas* came from the Karnataka region of southern India and brought a fierce devotion to Hindu culture. *Vijayasena* probably founded his capital at *Vijayapura* (Ganguly, 1994: 58) and he had a second one at *Vikrampurā*, near present Dhaka in Bangladesh.

*Vijayasena* seems to have left for his successor, *Vaḷḷasena* (c. 1159-1179 CE) an extensive trouble-free kingdom comprising virtually all of Bengal and he brought eastern Bihar and a part of Magadha under his sway. The next king, *Lakshmanasena* (c. 1179-1206 CE), the son of *Vaḷḷasena*, was the last distinguished and accomplished ruler of the line. He ascended the throne in 1179 AD and was an energetic and able ruler like his grandfather *Vijayasena* (Banerji, 1915: 107). *Vaḷḷasena* established his capital at Lakhnauti in Malda district and continued ruling over almost the whole Magadha and Bengal.

According to *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* by Minhaj, in 1204 AD, Muhammad bin *Bakhtiyār Khālji* made a surprise attack on his capital and *Lakshmanasena* had to scape escape to the territories on south of Ganges and west of Bhagirathi channel comprising of parts of present Birbhum, Burdwan, Bankura and Hooghly districts to eastern Bengal. He continued to rule in eastern Bengal for some time and his son *Viśvarupasena* (c. 1206-1225 CE) ruled from *Vikrampurā* before it was taken over by the Muslims.

With the advent of the *Senas*, Bengali society underwent a sea change. Since the *Senas* had brought from the south a deep devotion to Saivism, they established everywhere in Bengal the royally sponsored Hindu cults and royal patronage had shifted from a primarily Buddhist to a primarily Hindu orientation. During *Lakshmanasena's* rule Vaishnavism replaced Saivism and the Krishna and Rama *bhakti* traditions found favour by the court and the society as well (Khare, 2004: 23). When the Muslims conquered Bengal in 1204 AD, royal patronage shifted from a primarily Hindu to a primarily Muslim orientation.





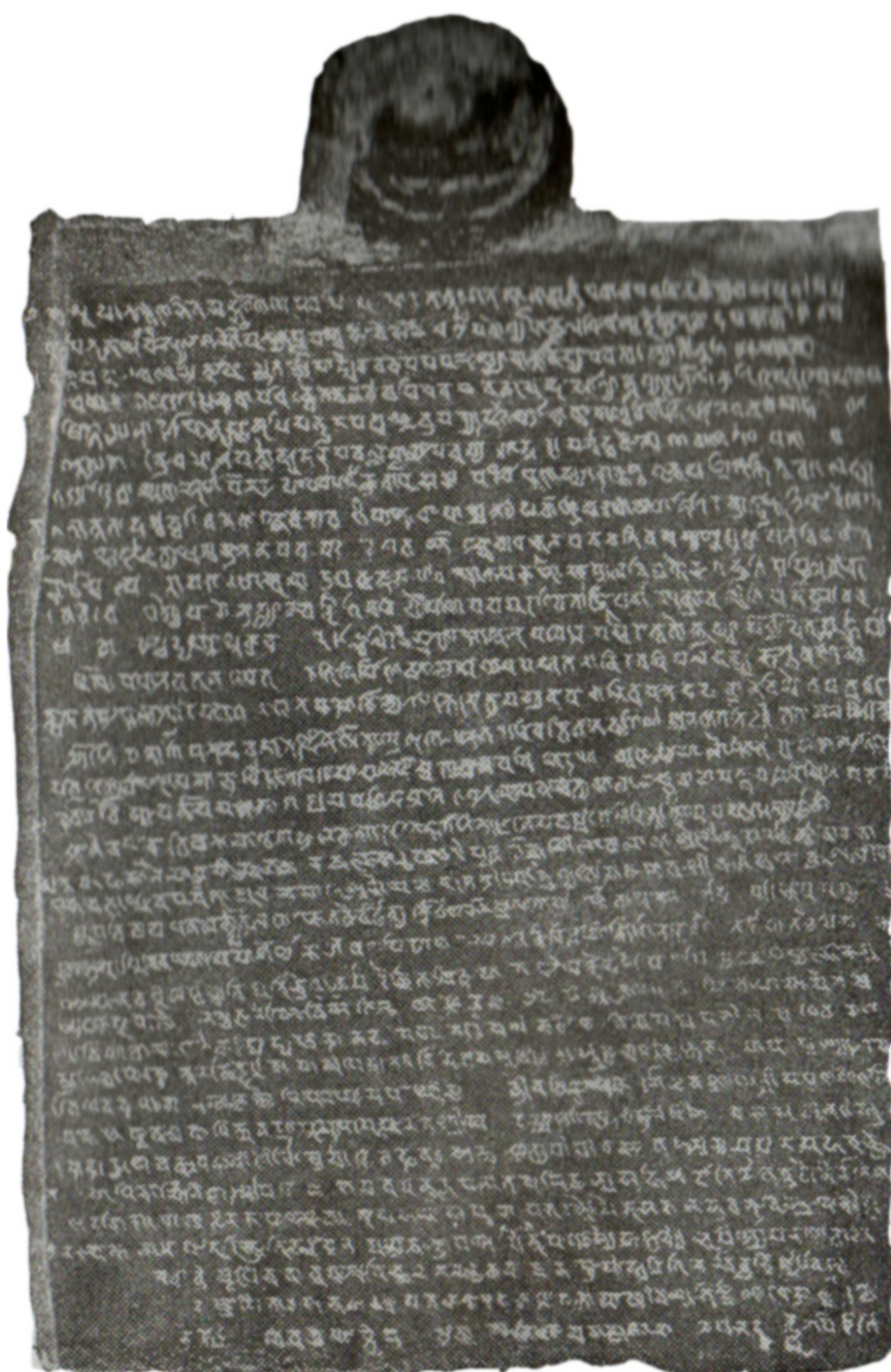
**Inscription 1:** Balabhata copper plate, side 1

Mainamati copper plate inscription of Khadga king Balabhata (7th Century AD)

**Source:**

Ahmed N. (1979) Bangladesh Archaeology 1979. Dhaka: Department of Archaeology and Museum in Bangladesh. Page-234





### Inscription 2: Copperplate inscription of Balabhatta, side 2

Mainamati copper plate inscription of Khadga king Balabhatta (7th Century AD)

#### Source:

Ahmed N. (1979) Bangladesh Archaeology 1979. Dhaka: Department of Archaeology and Museum in Bangladesh. Page-234





**Inscription 3: Mainamati Copperplate inscription of Anandadeva, side 1**

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Mainamati copper plate inscription of Anandadeva (7th- 8th century AD)

**Source:**

Ahmed N. (1979) Bangladesh Archaeology 1979. Dhaka: Department of Archaeology and Museum in Bangladesh. Page-235





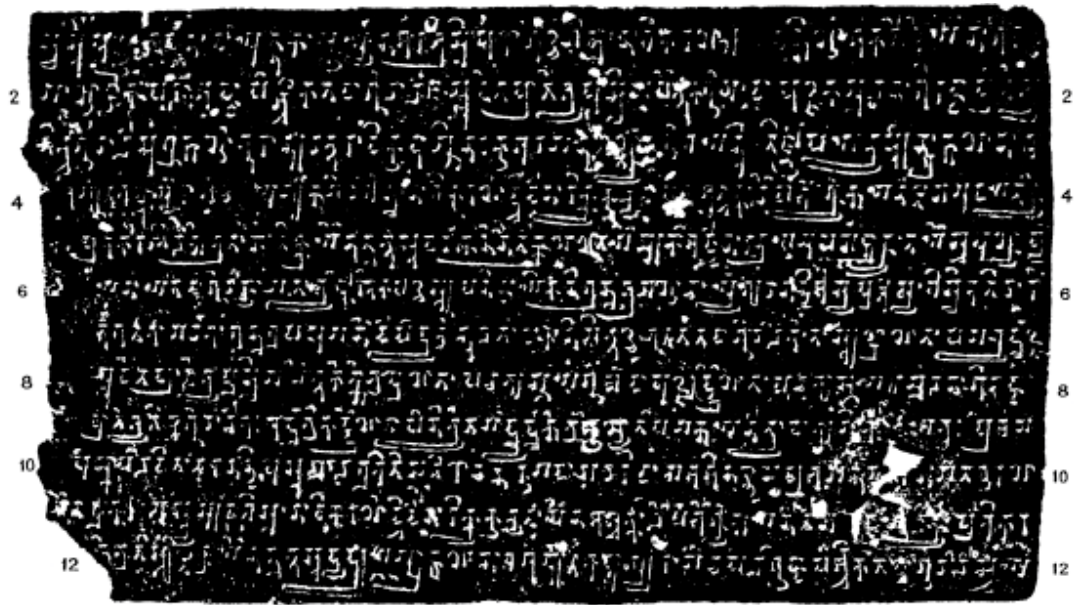
#### Inscription 4: Mainamati Copperplate inscription of Anandadeva, side 2

Mainamati copper plate inscription of Anandadeva (7th-8th century AD) with an endorsement of the grant by his son and successor Sri Bhavadeva

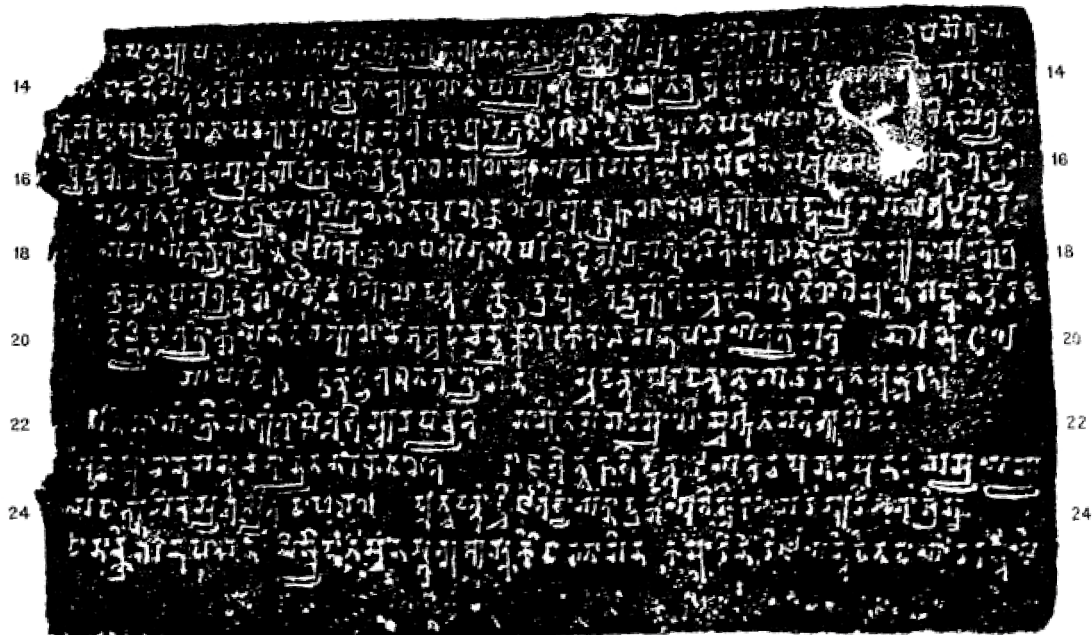
##### Source:

Ahmed N. (1979) Bangladesh Archaeology 1979. Dhaka: Department of Archaeology and Museum in Bangladesh. Page-235





Inscription 5(a)



Inscription 5(b)

### Inscription 5: Paharpur Copperplate of Budhagupta

Inscription 5(a): Paharpur Copperplate of Budhagupta (side 1)

Inscription 5(b): Paharpur Copperplate of Budhagupta (side 2)

#### Source:

K. N. Dikshit, *Epigraphia Indica*. Vol. XX (1929-30), pp. 59-64





Inscription 6(a)



Inscription 6(b)

**Inscription 6: Damodarpur Copperplate of Kumaragupta I**

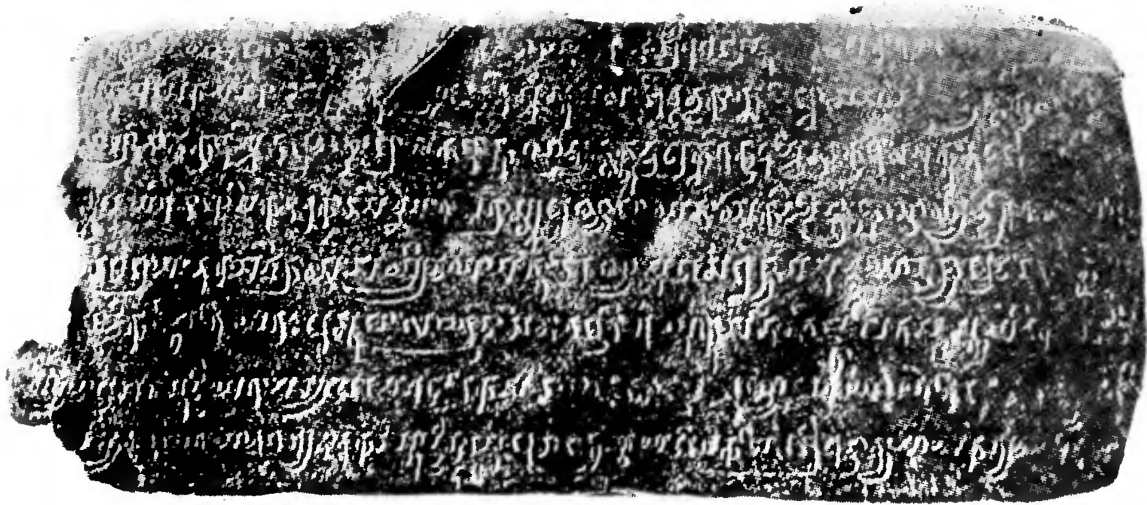
**Inscription 6(a):** Damodarpur Copperplate of Kumaragupta I (Rev)

**Inscription 6(b):** Damodarpur Copperplate of Kumaragupta I (Obv)

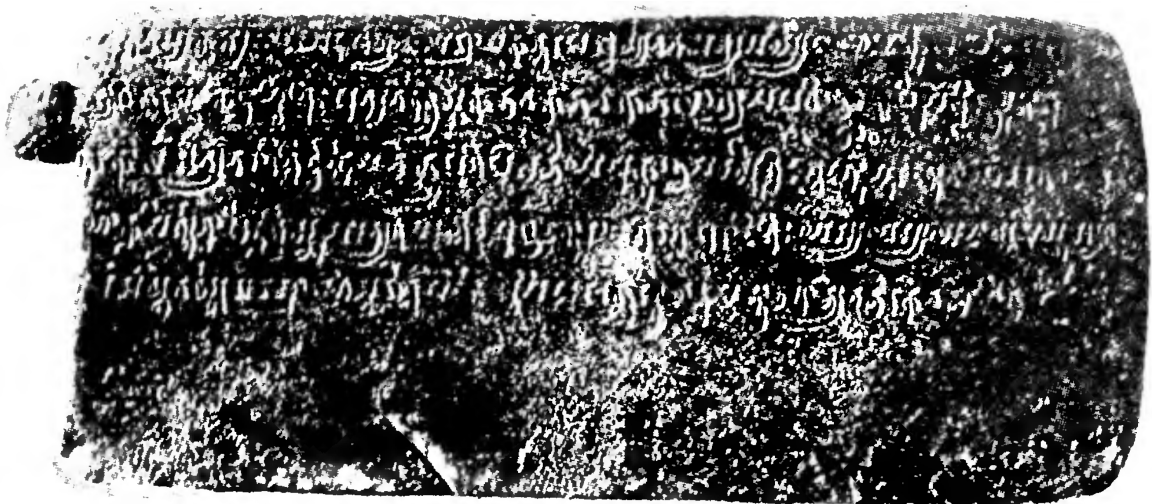
**Source:**

Sharma TR. (1978) personal and geographical names in the Gupta inscriptions, Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. Plate XIII, XIV





Inscription 7(a)



Inscription 7(b)

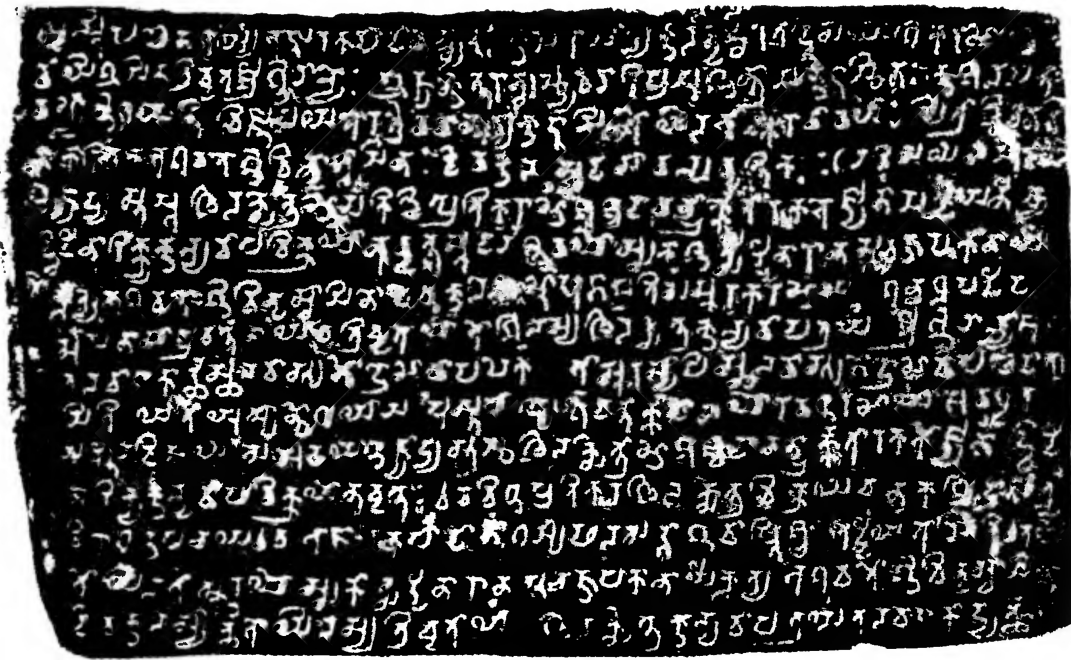
**Inscription 7: Damodarpur Copperplate of Budhagupta**

**Inscription 7(a):** Damodarpur Copperplate of Budhagupta (side 1)

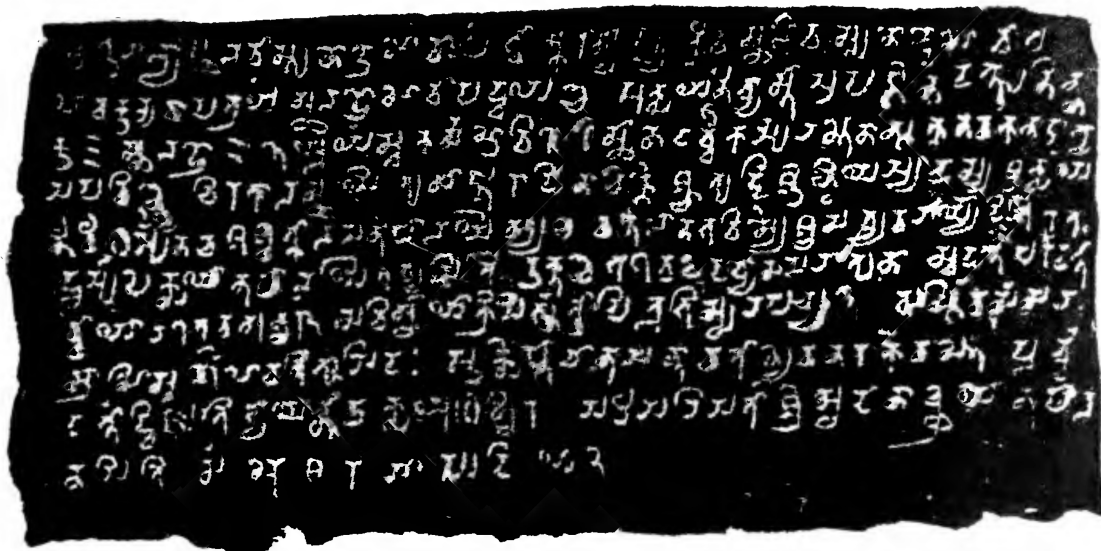
**Inscription 7(b):** Damodarpur Copperplate of Budhagupta (side 2)

**Source:**

Sharma TR. (1978) personal and geographical names in the Gupta inscriptions, Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. Plate XI,XII



Inscription 8(a)



Inscription 8(b)

### Inscription 8: Boigram Copperplate Inscription

Inscription 8(a): Boigram Copperplate Inscription (side 1)

Inscription 8(b): Boigram Copperplate Inscription (side 2)

#### Source:

Sharma TR. (1978) personal and geographical names in the Gupta inscriptions, Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. Plate XIX, XX





**Inscription 9: Gunaighar Copperplate Inscription of Vainyagupta**

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Gunaighar Copperplate Inscription of Vainyagupta (side 1), year 188

**Source:**

Sharma TR. (1978) personal and geographical names in the Gupta inscriptions, Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. Plate XXI



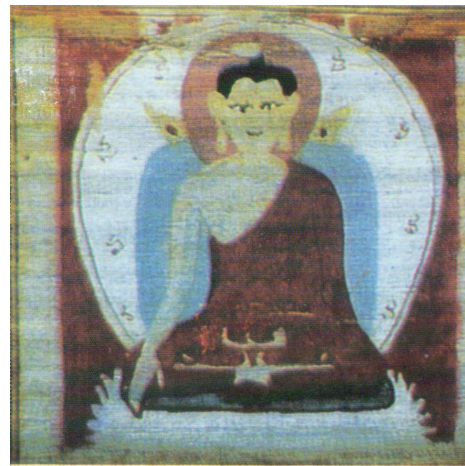
Painting 1(a)



Painting 1(b)



Painting 1(c)



Painting 1(d)



Painting 1(e)



Painting 1(f)

**Painting 1:** Miniature painting of *Panchavimsatisahasrika Prajnaparamita* 1

**Painting 1(a):** Buddha displaying the Dharmachakraprabartanamudra

**Painting 1(b):** Buddha displaying the Dharmachakraprabartanamudra

**Painting 1(c):** Buddha displaying the Dharmachakraprabartanamudra

**Painting 1(d):** Buddha in Bhumisparshamudra

**Painting 1(e):** Buddha in Bhumisparshamudra

**Painting 1(f):** Buddha in Dhyanamudra

**Source:** Haque E. (2007) *The Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 317





Painting 2(a)



Painting 2(b)



Painting 2(c)



Painting 2(d)



Painting 2(e)



Painting 2(f)

### Painting 2: Miniature painting of Panchavimsatisahasrika Prajnaparamita 2

Painting 2(a): Avalokiteshvara in varadamudra and accompanied Tara and Hyagriva

Painting 2(b): Avalokiteshvara in varadamudra and accompanied Tara and Hyagriva

Painting 2(c): Avalokiteshvara seated within a chaitya

Painting 2(d): Jambala

Painting 2(e): Dharmadhatu Bagisvari

Painting 2(f): 12 armed standing Avalokiteshvara

Source: Haque E. (2007) The Art Heritage of Bangladesh, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 318

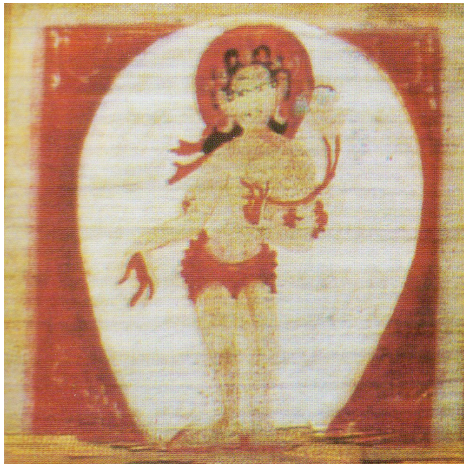




Painting 3(a)



Painting 3(b)



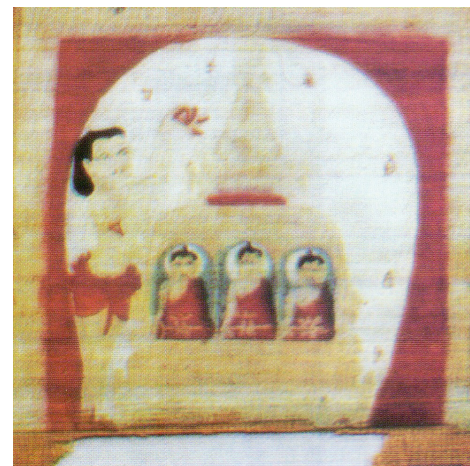
Painting 3(c)



Painting 3(d)



Painting 3(e)



Painting 3(f)

**Painting 3:** Miniature painting of *Panchavimsatisahasrika Prajnaparamita 3*

**Painting 3(a):** Avalokiteshvara standing within a shrine

**Painting 3(b):** Raktalokesvara with Hyagriva

**Painting 3(c):** Tara in varadamudra

**Painting 3(d):** Tara seated within a shrine

**Painting 3(e):** Tara with Janguli and Ekajata

**Painting 3(f):** A monk worshipping a stupa

**Source:** Haque E. (2007) *The Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 319





Painting 4(a)



Painting 4(b)



Painting 4(c)



Painting 4(d)



Painting 4(e)



Painting 4(f)

**Painting 4:** Miniature painting of *Panchavimsatisahasrika Prajnaparamita* 4

Painting 4(a): Two nagas worshipping a *chitya*

Painting 4(b): Composition of a *stupa* and a palm tree

Painting 4(c): Two devotes worshipping the *prajnaparamita* manuscript

Painting 4(d): *Avalokitesvara* seated in *varamudra*

Painting 4(e): *Manjushri* in *maharajalilasana*

Painting 4(f): *Tara* with companions

Source: Haque E. (2007) *The Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 320





Painting 5(a)



Painting 5(b)



Painting 5(c)



Painting 5(d)



Painting 5(e)



Painting 5(f)

**Painting 5:** Miniature painting of *Panchavimsatisahasrika Prajnaparamita* 5

**Painting 5(a):** A monk worshipping a stupa

**Painting 5(b):** Buddha showing *Dharmachakraprabartanamudra*

**Painting 5(c):** Eight armed Marichi

**Painting 5(d):** Buddha in *dhaynmudra*

**Painting 5(e):** A two armed goddess showing *Bhumisparshamudra*

**Painting 5(f):** Buddha displaying *Bhumisparshamudra*

**Source:** Haque E. (2007) *The Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 321





Painting 6(a)



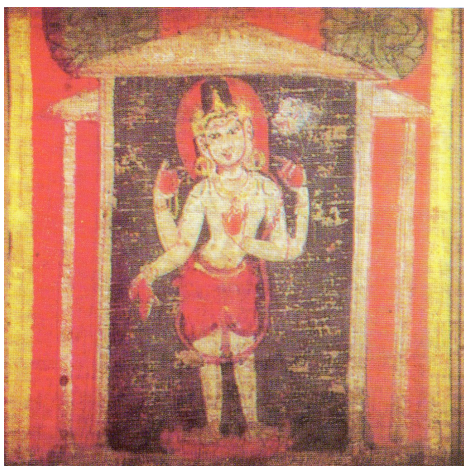
Painting 6(b)



Painting 6(c)



Painting 6(d)



Painting 6(e)



Painting 6(f)

**Painting 6:** Miniature painting of Panchavimsatisahasrika Prajnaparamita 6

Painting 6(a): Bodhisattava Avalokitesvara in Dharmachakraprabartanamudra

Painting 6(b): Sikhara shirsha bhadra type temple

Painting 6(c): Sikhara shirsha bhadra type temple

Painting 6(d): Square opening sikhara temple

Painting 6(e): Flat triangular roof temple

Painting 6(f): Flat triangular roof temple

Source: Haque E. (2007) The Art Heritage of Bangladesh, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 322





Sculpture 1(a)



Sculpture 1(b)



Sculpture 1(c)



Sculpture 1(d)

### Sculpture 1:

Sculpture 1(a): Tara, Bronze, Kotila Mura, Mainamati

Sculpture 1(b): Vishnu, Stone, Comilla

Sculpture 1(c): Buddha, Stone, Comilla

Sculpture 1(d): Buddha, Stone, Dinajpur

Source: Haque E. (2007) The Art Heritage of Bangladesh, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 106





Sculpture 1(a)



Sculpture 1(b)



Sculpture 1(c)



Sculpture 1(d)

## Sculpture 2:

Sculpture 2(a): Tathagata Akshobhya, stone, Munshigonj

Sculpture 2(b): Tathagata Amitabha, stone, Munshigonj

Sculpture 2(c): Rishabhanatha, stone, surohor, Dinajpur district

Sculpture 2(d): Tathagata ratnashamvhaba, stone, Vikrampu region, Munshiganj

## Source:

Haque E. (2007) The Art Heritage of Bangladesh, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 139, 144, 174





**Sculpture 3(a)**



**Sculpture 3(b)**

**Sculpture 3:**

**Sculpture 3(a):** Manjuvajra, stone, Vikrampur region, Munsiganj

**Sculpture 3(b):** Buddha, stone, Shibbati, Bagerhat

**Source:**

Haque E. (2007) The Art Heritage of Bangladesh, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 139, 173





Sculpture 4(a)



Sculpture 4(b)



Sculpture 4(c)

#### Sculpture 4:

Sculpture 4(a): Miniature temple from jhewari, Bronze, Chittagong disstrict

Sculpture 4(b): Toy cat, Terracotta, Chandraketugrah, West bengal

Sculpture 4(c) : Miniature temple form Dinajpur district, stone

#### Source:

Haque E. (2007) The Art Heritage of Bangladesh, Dhaka: The International Center for Study of Bengal Art, Page 172, 163